



OLD LONDON BRIDGE,

A

ROMANCE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

G. HERBERT RODWELL, ESQ.,

Illustrated

BY

ALFRED ASHLEY.

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To the Memory
OF
PETER OF GOLECHURCH,
The Priest-Architect,
WHO BUILT

Old London Bridge.

THE FIRST STONE BRIDGE THAT EVER CROSSED
THE RIVER OF THAMES,

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR
G. HERBERT RODWELL.

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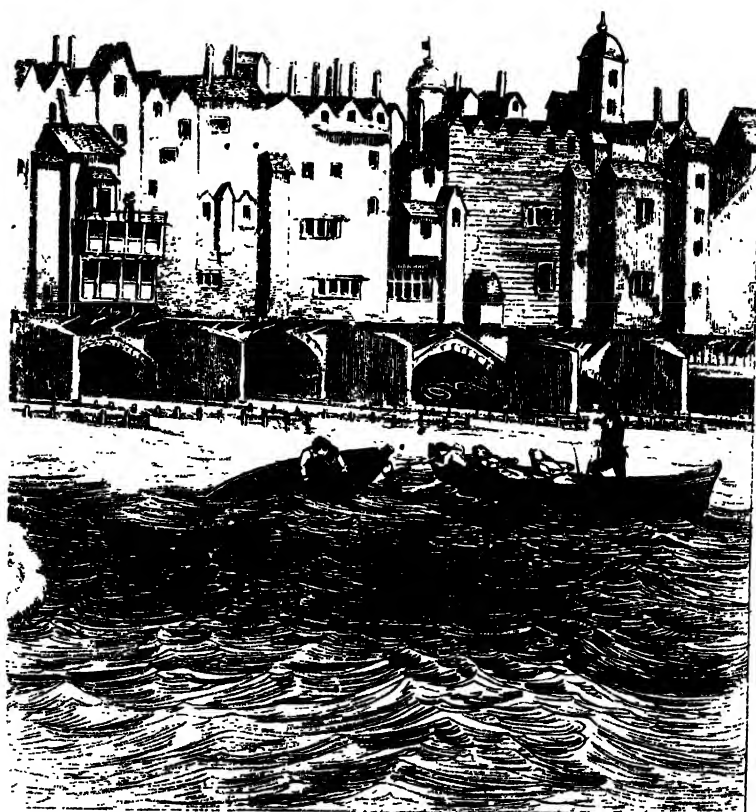
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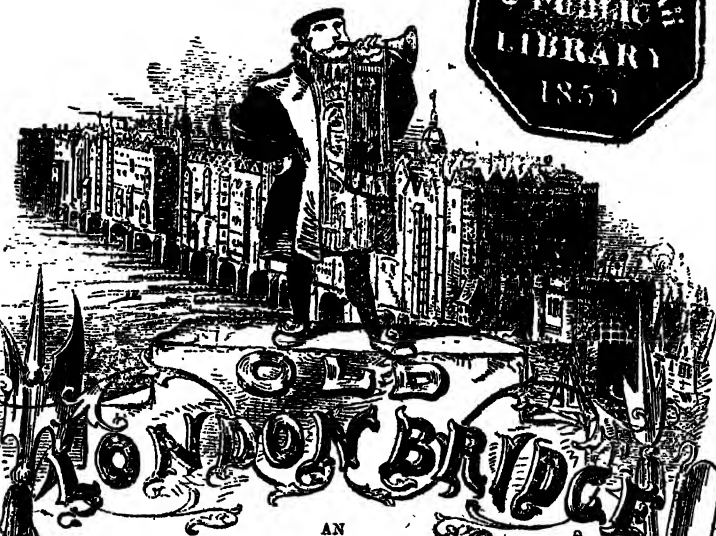
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DESIGNED AND ENGRAVED BY ALFRED ASHLEY.

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AN
HISTORICAL ROMANCE,

BY
GEORGE HERBERT RODWELL.

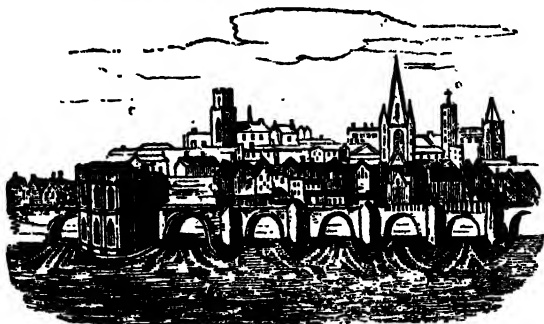
CHAPTER I.

Hail bounteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth and youth, and warm desire;
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long. — MILTON.

IN the street of the Bridge—OLD LONDON BRIDGE—upon the afternoon of May-day, 1536, not a shop door was to be seen without its little knot of gossips, laying their heads together in a vain endeavour to solve some important mystery; every window that *would* open* was occupied by two or three, or more heads, piled one above the other, nodding and shaking and looking more wise than those wise heads had ever looked before; but these were kept in good countenance, by the opposite windows being in like manner adorned with heads, nodding and shaking, and with equal wisdom too.

* In those days, most of the windows, unless in the houses of the great, were fixtures much to the encouragement of plagues and other fatal diseases.

From the upper windows, apprentice boys, who had not been allowed to go a-maying, seemed to be hanging out to dry, so far did their bodies



reuch down, in endeavouring to get within earshot of the wondrous conjectures uttered by those beneath.

Around one of the doors stood a rather larger crowd than the others—above their

heads swung a tremendous sign—called “The Bag of Wool, and the Golden Fleece,”* and over the shop to which this sign belonged, was written, in large well-formed letters—

“WILLIAM HEWET, CLOTHWORKER AND MERCHANT.”

“Well,” said John Catchemayde, the bowyer from next door—“What does honest neighbour Hewet say? I’ll wager the best bow in my shop, and may the curse of Robin Hood light upon every yew twig I take in hand, if I don’t make good my wage, but that if Master Hewet—now mark me, friends—I say, that if Master Hewet do but open his mouth, and speak his mind *aloud*, we shall hear *something*.” This did not appear to be a very hazardous wager, but Catchemayde looked around at those who listened to him, with that peculiar expression of countenance, half bullying, half fearing, which men at times put on when they have a misgiving of having gone a little too far, and tremble for the consequences; but a knowing twitch of the head, and a slight wink from all the bystanders, as much as to say, “Old birds are not caught with chaff,” soon relieved him of his doubt; and Dick Checklocke, the smith, after a rather long and appropriate oath, observed—“No, no, friend Catchemayde, you don’t catch us—we know Master Hewet as well as you do; and well we know that what Master Hewet does say—he does say; and what Master Hewet doesn’t say—he doesn’t! An’t I right, neighbours?—to be sure I am.” Then in accordance with the fashion of the time, he sent forth another long oath,

* This sign had evidently *not* been painted by the great Hans Holbein, who dwelt hard by, but by some limner, who, to convey an idea of the happiness derivable from a golden fleece, had adopted a most extraordinary method of doing so, for he had painted a most wretched, melancholy, cadaverous looking sheep, dancing about on its hind legs, and which appeared to be wofully afflicted with the yellow jaundice, for, in truth, it was one unshaded mass of yellow ochre. This was no doubt intended to represent gold; but how the large square piece of, what seemed to be, stone, with four great iron knobs at the corners, looking as rigid and hard as either of those substances, could by any stretch of the imagination be mistaken for the soft and pliant bag of wool, it is beyond our power to divine. This effort of genius proved one thing—that in those days there were no George Morelands going about painting signs for a few nights’ lodgings, that in after times would fetch their weight in gold.

something about the "Beard of *Saint Vulcan*," or, he added, "by that, or any other saint that had ever been a blacksmith—he'd take Master Hewet's word, ay, that he would, even before that of his own father confessor."

Such a wicked assertion made every one in the crowd shudder to the very back bone, which Cheeklooke observing, he crossed himself devoutly in a most extravagant manner, and set his lips off at full gallop, but uttered no sound, so that he appeared to be making faces at all who looked at him. At the conclusion of his inward confession, he called aloud upon "the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne, and *Saint Ursula* to boot, to bear witness that he meant no harm."

"But I repeat it," chimed in John Catchemayde. "Yes, I repeat it, what does Master Hewet say?"

The person thus called upon, was regarded as the very oracle of London Bridge. One of the greatest proofs of the profound wisdom of Master Hewet might be found in the fact of this honest clothworker never having once got himself into trouble with the state, notwithstanding his reputed wealth. He was a tall handsome man of middle age, with a countenance whose expression bespoke more of sedateness and steadiness of thought, than of aught approaching to brilliancy of imagination.

His doublet and sleeves were of fine brown broadcloth, as were also his upper and nether stocks, or, in modern phraseology, his smallclothes and his stockings, which, being sewn together above the knee, appeared almost as one. But the portion of his dress, which at once bespoke him a man of substance, was his black cloak being well furred with martens' skins—the gold chain, too, which hung around his neck, also betokened one of no mean wealth; for martens' fur, and ornaments of gold, such as chains or bracelets, or collars, could be worn by none but such as enjoyed a good clear income of at least two hundred marks a year. A pouch, somewhat after the fashion of a lady's reticule of our day, hung by a double silver chain from his girdle, answering all the purposes of a pocket. A square low cap adorned his head, and enormously broad-toed shoes were on his feet. His handsome visage was close shaven, all but the chin, from which a neatly-trimmed beard was permitted to grow. A small flat white shirt collar, turned down about the neck, and a short dagger at his side, completed the appearance of honest Master Hewet.

Those by whom he was addressed (this being a holiday) were habited somewhat in like style; but their clothes were made of coarser materials, and no gold, nor silver, nor even a gilt button, was to be seen upon their jerkins or their cloaks; and even the fur they wore, was merely that of the lamb. The different kinds of fur then in wear, formed very distinctive marks as to the various grades of society.

Master Hewet, who, up to this time, had been paying much more attention to the piles of velvets and satins, and cloths of gold, and of silver, and damasks, which had but recently arrived from Italy, than he did to the gossiping babble of his inquiring neighbours, now finding himself hard pressed, raised his eyes from off the tablet, upon which he had been setting down memoranda concerning the treasures which then lay around him, and looking steadily for an instant into the faces of

Catchemayde, Checklocke, and the others, who all stood before the open shop front, with mouths almost as wide open, quite ready to devour every word he should utter—he heaved a sigh—then shaking his head, again commenced writing upon the tablet.

The bye-standers closed their mouths slowly as they began to look at each other in evil lent consternation, and one of them burst out with—“Quite enough, quite enough! Let but Master Hewet shake his head, and we all know what that means.”

“Ay, ay; more trouble, more trouble, my masters!” bawled out Catchemayde; “and’oply to think of it lapp’ning upon May-day too, when we all wanted to be so happy and merry.”

“As for myself,” said Checklocke, “I’ll have a dance on Mary Overie green to-day, though they should make me dance upon nothing to-morrow. They may hang me if they like—I dare say it’s not so bad when one’s used to it; and, by St. Thomas of the Bridge, we are pretty used to it now-o’-days.”

“And shall be more so yet! ho, ho! ha, ha! he, he!” the last “he, he!” sounding almost like a whistle, as it was screeched out by an ugly cripple, whose voice made all who heard it start suddenly aside, leaving him in an open space exactly before the shop of the Golden Fleecce. *

This cripple was a young man, but whose head was nevertheless nearly bald; nature had from the first denied fertility to the soil upon

* This scene of excitement had perchance scarcely ever been surpassed since David de Land-aye, Earl of Crawford, a Scottish knight, in 1390, overthrew the Lord John de Welles, of England, in a joust, upon this selfsame bridge of London. They had met to uphold the honour of their respective countries, and so chivalrously did the noble David bear himself upon that proud day for Scotland, that when, upon the third encounter, the Lord de Welles lay prostrate before his valorous foe, instead of vantage taking, and striking his dagger into the throat of the vanquished lord, he threw himself in kind embrace upon the neck of the wounded knight, exclaiming—“Live, Sir Knight! I fought without anger, and but for glory of my native land.”

Since Old London Bridge is to become the very heart of our romance, we will give the reader some idea of its appearance about the middle of the sixteenth century, as it then stood, the “Pride of our Proud City, and Wonder of the World.”

This high-sounding title was, at the time we speak of, richly deserved, and was not unfrequently used in olden times, particularly by foreigners, who, having visited our metropolis, to barter their Milan steel for our strong English bows, or bring our kings some young and beauteous princess as a bride, would write (the few who could write) to their friends in the most distant quarters of the then known globe, extolling, as “this world’s wonder,” our famous London Bridge.

Old London Bridge, our old London Bridge, was begun as long ago as 1176, and after thirty-three years of labour, was finished in 1209. Peter of Colechurch, the priest-architect, who built it, although often blamed in our day for his lack of engineering knowledge, must have laid his foundations pretty sure, for the arches he then raised were the same that, in 1831, were pulled down upon the completion of the present structure, having lasted no less than 622 years, in spite of the ceaseless torrent of the mighty Thames.

There were originally twenty arches, or rather spaces, between the piers—for one was covered, not by an arch, but by a drawbridge, to allow of ships passing to the more western part of the city.

Upon the upper platform, or roadway, which was forty feet wide there stood two towers, one on either side of the eighteenth arch, close to the Southwark end; and in the centre of the bridge a beautiful chapel was erected, which chapel was dedicated to St. Thomas & Becket, and thence called—“St. Thomas of the Bridge.”

Now, as the English, who, ever since they have borne that name, have been—and

which the hair should have grown, and thus the head of age seemed by mistake to have been fixed upon the neck of youth. The few hairs which were found there were perfectly white, but so stubborn in their nature that they stuck up on end, like so many needles in a cushion; his scanty moustaches grew in a most remarkable manner from the two extremities of the upper lip, the centre of which being entirely bare, gave them the effect of a couple of overgrown hairy moles; habit had so long been digging deep lines in every portion of his face, by an unceasing nervous grin, that even the placid spirit of sleep could not for a moment fill them up again. He wore the badge of servitude upon his left arm, and that badge bespoke him a servant of the bridge; his crippled leg made it necessary to walk, or hobble, by the assistance of a long staff, which, notwithstanding his lameness, he was known full oft to use, and that to good purpose too, upon the heads of those who dared offend him.

How often do we find that where Nature, appearing to have been out of temper when moulding into form some luckless lump of human clay, and in her spite has sent forth a thing to show what power she has even to disgust as well as charm, that in these sad examples Pity has staid her hand before the unsightly work was ushered to the world, and, as in Pandora's box, we ever find relenting nature has left at least one little spark of Hope, the mind to claim command—the poet's turn of thought—the music of the tongue—or some such charm shines forth so brilliantly, that our sense becomes dazzled, our eyes are blinded to the rough mounting, we only see the sparkling gem within. Thus it was with the Cripple of the Bridge: his form was crooked, his arms had been cast in two odd moulds, his eyes were set so deeply in his head,

Heaven grant they may long remain so, for it speaks of industry, peace, and wealth—"a nation of shopkeepers," soon discovered that such a thoroughfare as the bridge must inevitably become, might easily be transformed into a mine of wealth, so, almost immediately upon its completion, did they begin to build shops thereon.

These shops, or rather sheds—for at first they were but little more—day by day increased in value, then in numbers, and ere long took the more dignified form and name of houses, soon having the addition of a sleeping-room behind them; and, in consequence of the narrowness of the bridge, which, as we have said, was only forty feet wide, these extra rooms were made to overhang the sides of the bridge, in many instances to an awful and truly dangerous extent.

The traffic of the bridge, and consequently the trade, increasing rapidly, more commodious buildings arose; many of them reaching to four and even five stories in height. To hold together the two sides of the Bridge Street—for such it had now become, and such it was now called—many of the grander buildings extended entirely across, thus binding together, and keeping the overhanging dwellings from falling outwards into the river. Beneath these last-mentioned stupendous structures was a wide and lofty archway, under which the main road passed. This road was twenty feet wide in most parts, but in others it was reduced to the very narrow limits of four yards.

When the reader recalls to mind the style of architecture so greatly admired in those days, and pictures to himself the houses with every story projecting some feet beyond the one beneath, he will easily conceive the proximity of the upper windows on the two sides of this narrow way;—indeed, in some cases they almost touched, rendering the street beneath dark, dingy, close, and unwholesome. To obviate, as far as possible, this drawback to health and comfort, three wide openings were left unbuilt upon, from which a splendid view might be obtained both up and down the river. These openings acted, also, as safeguards to foot-passengers, who could here find protection when the road was inconveniently thronged with carts and carriages. The greatest of these three openings was that of

that they ever seemed to be searching the inward man, to find those lost beauties of which the exterior stood so much in need.

It was strange that one, whose laugh and sound of speech resembled more the peacock's screech, or howlet's cry, than that of human breath, should, if he sang, possess a voice of heavenly sweetness: but so it was; let him but sing, and all his deformities, even all his spite, and he carried within his mind a heavy load of it, were, by the power of that spell, forgotten.

"Yes, ye dainty pets of mother nature!" he exclaimed, "ye straight-limbed fools, who, because ye can walk upright through the world, believe your souls as upright as your bodies, ye shall be more and more used to hanging, and burning too, or I know not the inward spirit of your master—your master! hear ye that? that master whom HEAVEN, as we are told, hath placed over you; yes, Heaven, however your wicked fancies may make you think his devoted love of flames should indicate a different paternity:" and again his chuckling screech came forth, as though he thought he had uttered a witticism almost too pungent to be endured: then continuing—"And there, too, stands *handsome* Master Hewet, whose beauty alone is quite enough to keep him warm, and counteract all earthly troubles. Who, with such a form as that, could ever once look sad? How different to mine! But we shall see—we shall—ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he! I shall boil his head yet!—I shall boil his head yet! And mark me, brother Hewet—" and as he addressed the merchant, his whole countenance changed; the grin was there, for that never left his features, but it was now the grin of utter malevolence, as he went on—"Yes, brother Hewet, I shall boil your head yet! and, by the blue sky above us, I swear that when I do, I'll drink, and fatten on the broth—ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he!—I'll fatten on the broth." Saying this, the cripple began to move away; but still, as he went, he continued to mutter, "Yes, yes; I shall boil his head yet—I shall boil his head yet!"

"Well," said Catchemayde, but not until the cripple was quite out of hearing, "Master Hewet must be a sweeter-minded man than I am, to

the drawbridge, and was fifty feet wide, forming an admirable standing-place upon days of aquatic pageants for those merry-making citizens who ever loved to see such sights, and yet lacking the advantage of being acquainted with the wealthy traders of the bridge, who were enabled to get a peep at the show more commodiously from the windows of the houses. Another method of tying, as it were, the opposite sides of the street together, was by enormous wooden beams extending from roof to roof, and also by transverse narrow bridges: from most of these swung ever-creaking signs of most fanciful device. Here floated in the breeze "The Lock of Hair,"—there "The Three Bibles;"—here the tempting "Sugar Loaf," and there "The Lamb and Breches." But as we shall, in all probability, have to converse with some of the owners of these pictorial show-cards, we will for the present pass them by.

Of the exterior appearance of Old London Bridge we need say but little, the illustration, by our artist, of the east side, as seen when coming up from Greenwich, and displaying one-half of the hundred houses then upon the bridge, giving a far more vivid idea of its general effect than could possibly be conveyed in words. Yet, picturesque as all representations of this unrivalled structure undoubtedly are, yet there is one point, which adds so greatly to the picturesque, in which every attempt of the limner cannot but fail—we mean the impossibility of conveying a just idea of the rapid motion of the angry flood, and that deafening roar, that ceaseless noise of falling waters. Every passage between the piers was so reduced by the great thick-

bear the insolence of such a cripple; had he addressed me thus, I would have brained the villain."

"Like enough, like enough," said Checklocke, "that is, if his hands had been tied, and his staff in your own; but you know, as well as most of us, that Willy of the Bridge-gate Tower is no trifling playmate when one comes to handy-cuffs."

"You would cease to be angry," said Master Hewet, now placing his tablet in the pouch by his side, "as I have long since been, and would feel as much pity for that poor afflicted soul as I do, were you but as well acquainted with his story as I am."

"What story?" exclaimed every voice at once, now forgetting all their previous anxiety caused by the strange circumstance which had just occurred at the opening of the chapter, showing how easily the attention of a crowd may be diverted by a mere chance word, or even the pointing of a finger, from its most cherished pursuit.

Checklocke's bravado concerning his not caring about being hanged, was allowed to sink into oblivion, and every man became a child; for "men nees of the piers themselves, and by the various rows of piles driven around them for their protection, and called the "Sterlings," that at certain hours of the tide this river of eight hundred feet in width had to force itself through narrow ways that, in all, did not amount to one quarter of that space; so that, at times, the flood was no less than six feet higher on the one side of the bridge than on the other, forming a fearful cataract beneath every arch, leading to certain death the miserable wretch who was drawn within its resistless power.

On the night of Sunday, July 6th, 1450, Jack Cade being then in Southwark, the city captains, the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of London, mounted guard upon the Bridge. "The rebelles," says Hall in his Chronicle, "which neuer soundly slepte, for feare of sodayne chaunces, hearing the Bridge to be kept and manned, ran with great haste to open the passage, where betwene bothe partes was a ferce and cruell encounter. Matthew Gough, more experte in martiall feates than the other Cheuetaynes of the Citie, perceiuing the Kentishmen better to stand to their tackling than his ymagination expected, aduised his company no farther to procede toward Southwarke, till the day appored; to the intent, that the Citizens hearing where the place of the iopardye rested, might secure their enemies and reloue their frondes and companions. But this counsaile came to smal effect: for the multitude of the rebelles drave the Citizens from the stoulpes,"—wooden piles,—at the Bridge-foote, to the Drawe-bridge, and began to set fyre in diuers houses. Alas! what sorow it was to behold that miserable chaunce: for some desyringe to eschewe the fyre lepte on his enemies weapon, and so died: fearfull women, with chyldren in their armes, amased and appalled, lepte into the riuer; other, doubtinge how to saue them self betwene fyre, water, and swourd, were in their houses suffocate and smoldered; ytt the Captayn nothing regarding these chaunces, fought on this Draw-Bridge all the nyghte valeauntly; but in conclusion the rebelles got the Drawe-Bridge and drowned many, and slew John Sutton, Alderman, and Robert Hey-ande, a hardy Citizen, with many other, besyde Matthew Gough, a man of great wit much experience in feates of cheualrie, the which in continual warres had valeauntly serued the King, and his father, in the partes beyond the sea. But it is often sene, that he which many tymes hath vanquyshed his enemies in straunge countreys, and returned again as a conqueror, hath of his owne nation afterward ben shamfully murdered and brought to confusion. This hard and sore conflict endured on the Bridge till ix. of the elocke in the mornyng in doubtful chaunce and Fortune's balance: for some tyme the Londoners were bet back to the stulpes at Saint Magnes Corner; and sodaynly agaynd the rebelles were repuled and driuen back to the stulpes in Southwarke, so that both partes beynde faynte, wery, and fatygate, agreed to desist from fight, and to leue battyll till the next day, upon condition that neyther Londoners should pass into Southwarke, nor the Kentishmen into London."

are but children of a larger growth;" then arranging themselves in true childish manner before the window of Master Hewet's shop, they became all ears.

"It is now some years since," began the honest merchant, "when——"

"Eh! what's that," exclaimed Harry Silkworm, the stringer. "Egad, they're coming at last. Huzza! huzza! They're coming, they're coming at last!"

Every eye and every ear was now suddenly turned towards the northern end of the bridge, whence arose a loud murmuring, and ever and anon, amidst distant shouts, the sweeter sounds of music.

The crowd thought no more of Master Hewet, nor of the Cripple's tale, but hurried off, shouting and laughing like mad, to meet the coming throng.

The cavalcade and vast procession announced by the distant sounds which had so suddenly put a stop to the, no doubt, interesting history of the Cripple, was that of the anxiously-awaited Maypole for St. Mary Overies' Green.

It had been expected many hours before, but in consequence of the great rains which had lately fallen, the roads, if roads they could be called, were in such wretched state, that at times great fears were entertained whether or not the Maypole would arrive until it had become a pole of some other month.

Great interest had been exerted in the highest quarters, even with the King, to obtain a reversal of the cruel sentence which had doomed to exile the greatest pride of the City, the lofty Maypole, that had formerly every year reared its proud head upon Cornhill, but which had not been used for now some eighteen years; no, never since the unlucky "Evil May-day" of 1517. So great a riot had then occurred, that the future raising of this mighty shaft was by command prohibited. It was of such gigantic proportions, that it far o'ertopped the steeple of the neighbouring church, and caused that church henceforth to be denominated St. Andrew Undershaft.

Now, although the fate of that poor Maypole could not be reversed, yet permission had been obtained to raise another on the green of St. Mary Overies, a lovely spot, not far removed from the southern end of Old London Bridge.

Great indeed had been the preparations for bringing in from Highgate the envied shaft; and great indeed had been the heart-burnings engendered between the "Lads of Southwark" and "The city boys." The good folk of the Bridge cared little which side got the day; they were a kind of go-between, a sort of peace-maker, or, rather, peace-keeper, for if high words on either side of the Thames appeared to be but the prologue to hard blows, they at once raised their drawbridge, and thus kept the hot bloods apart until a little cooled, and rendered capable of flowing calmly in the channels of discretion.

It was in consequence of the great honour conferred upon the Bridge, by the new Maypole condescending to pass across it, that every house was now decorated from top to bottom, with green boughs and sweet May flowers. Festoons and garlands hung from side to side, and every Sign was in like manner adorned.

As the shouts increased, and thus announced the nearer approach of the darling Maypole, all the ladies of the Bridge began to wave kerchiefs of every colour of the rainbow; for although colours, in those days, were settled by law, yet that law embraced a pretty many shades; we are plainly told, that scarlet, red, crimson, murrey, brown, blues, black, greens, yellows, orange, tawney, russet, marblegrey, with sheep's colour, and lion's colour, and motley, or iron-grey, as well as puke, the sadnew colour, and asewer, and watchett, were all right lawful tints; then what were the unlawful ones?—no one ever thought of asking that question, so the answer cannot be found.

The head of the procession was led on by a noted band of morris, or *moreauque*, dancers, whose wild antics, and jingling bells that hung about their legs, gave infinite delight to all who were fortunate enough to witness the display.

In one hand, each of these dancers held a shortish stick, highly adorned with streaming ribbons of varied hues; and in the other, the corner of a bright scarlet handkerchief: these they continually waved about, first up, then down, then sideways, then around their heads, but all the time dancing with their feet in a fashion perfectly their own.

Wherever a smiling female face appeared at any of the windows, of rather fairer features than the rest, they all at once pointed their staves towards the spot, making the lovely face more lovely still, by the deep blush their notice had called up; and then they sang—

“ From Moorish lands we come, fair maid,
 “ To seek out Beauty's Queen;
 “ But all our toil is now repaid,
 “ Since thy sweet face we've seen.”

Then they all laughed at the confusion they had caused to the fair object of their praises, and springing up, as if to fly in at the window, all kissed their hands to the beauty, and, with another merry laugh, moved on to repeat their gallantry a few doors off.

The first fair dame they had thus singled out, was Alyce Hewet, wife to our honest merchant; and well had they proved the goodness of their taste, for seldom had a fairer face been seen than that of lovely Alyce Hewet: and, yet, beside her stood one, who, although but then a child, gave promise of future loveliness that would, if ever she arrived at womanhood, throw into shade even the sweet features of Dame Alyce, the admitted beauty of the Bridge.

This angelic child was the only daughter of merchant Hewet, and not a little proud did he feel upon that day, as standing on the other side of this, his darling offspring, and supporting her upon the window-sill, while her little arms were playing around her mother's neck, to observe that not a soul passed by, but made some remark to those most near at hand, evidently in admiration of what they saw at the casement of the Golden Fleece.

Next to the morris dancers came the city trumpeters, decked out in their golden coats of state; to these, succeeded the loud-sounding kettle drums; the city arms most richly worked in gold and silk and silver, hung down from every instrument. Each pair of drums was slung

upon the back of a sturdy clown who walked before the drummer, or as he was then called drumslade, and grinned and laughed as much at the crowd, as the crowd grinned and laughed at him, for these funny wags of drumslades, would every now and then, just to raise the mirth and solace the standers by, pretend to miss the drumhead and hit the head of the luckless wight instead; but it was all holiday fun, so a good knock could be given, and taken too, with no worse result than a hearty laugh.

Then came some hundreds of apprentice boys, dressed all in their best—their cloaks were new, and blue, for the summer months were coming. Their white slops, or breeches, were round and somewhat loose; not so their nether hose, the tightly-fitting broad cloth stockings, which reaching half way up the leg, were sewn to the slops, and being also white, seemed all in one. Each wore a ribbon of the favorite colour of the ward in which their master lived; their flat caps were all adorned with a sprig of May, and on their shoulders rested the far-famed "Prentice Club."

Close to their heels came the Southwark band of musicians playing upon *shlams*, and other instruments bearing equally euphonious names, besides a number of rebecs (fiddles with three strings), supposed to have been, like the morris dance, the invention of the Moors; then followed half a dozen bagpipers, the effect of whose screaming music was greatly heightened by the shrill cornets, crooked like goats' horns, the trumps and sagbutts, these gave wonderful delight, for our ancestors were wondrously fond of noise; the next portion might have given pleasure even to "modern ears polite," for this consisted of a large party of singing girls, whose voices were well sustained by the pleasing accompaniment of flutes and recorders, that is large flageolets with theorbos and smaller lutes. After the musicians came a large company of the "Southwark lads," as a guard of honour to the Lord Mayor, Sir Ralph Waren, who, with the Lady Mayoress mounted behind him on a pillion, rode upon a noble, cream-coloured charger, whose gallant bearing, and tossing of whose head, evinced his consciousness of the worthy load he bore. The Mayor and his good lady, whose natal day it happened to be, had condescended upon this auspicious occasion to become the Lord and Lady of the May. To do full honour to this worthy knight and his fair dame, the sheriffs, and all the aldermen of the various wards, came mounted in like manner, each with his spouse, his sister, or his fair daughter riding behind him, dressed out in all the pomp of civic grandeur. At this moment the sun, as if to smile upon this goodly show of wealth and beauty, shone forth with redoubled splendour, and caused the crowd to burst out into an universal shout of heartfelt admiration. Not only the riders, but the splendid chargers too, were fancifully bedecked with May flowers of every sort.

Immediately after these came the gem of gems, the glory of the day, the gorgeous Maypole!

No less than thirty oxen were employed, two by two, to drag this monstrous shaft. The ropes by which they were attached to the machine whereon the Maypole lay, were covered with flowers of every kind then

in bloom ; to each horn of the ox was attached a nosegay of sweet herbs and sweeter flowers.

The Maypole itself, large as the mast of a ship, was painted in twisted bands of various colours. At several parts enormous hoops hung around the shaft, suspended by variegated ribbons, and thickly covered with hawthorn boughs and sweetest eglantine, mixed up with roses. These hoops were made to move easily around the pole, and from them hung down long lines of Flora's choicest gifts.

The two first oxen, perfect beauties in their way, were entirely white, and had the honour of being led with golden chains fastened to their horns, by the two wardens of the bridge ; the rest were guided by the servants of the Lord Mayor, in their state liveries.

The rear of this long and magnificent procession was guarded by two enormous giants, dressed after the fashion of Gog and Magog in Guildhall, and a joyous, wide-mouthed, waggle-tailed dragon, who ever and anon threw out fiery squibs and crackers amongst the crowd, which caused even more laughter than did the score of merry jesters in their caps and bells, and patty-coloured jerkins, whose greatest piece of wit appeared to consist in jumping upon each other's shoulders, and then falling headlong over amongst the crowd ; this they generally did wherever they saw a little knot of pretty, smiling girls, around half a dozen of whose necks the falling jester would cling at once for support, and mostly returned his thanks in a dozen hearty smacks upon their ruby lips.

Next to this great feat of fun, was that of all the jesters together pulling at the dragon's tail, which being made to give way, whenever the man inside liked to let go the string, they all fell down backwards in a heap. The dragon then would turn indignantly around, and puff a quantity of flower from his nostrils, right into the face of any country clown, who, open-mouthed, might be laughing loudest at the fun.

Thus, then, moved on the Maypole merry crowd, who, then, as usual upon all holiday occasions, seemed to forget for a brief space that they lived in a reign of tyranny, deceit, of fire and of blood.

The moment the eyes of the good folk of the Bridge were opened to the splendid delights preparing for them on Saint Mary Overies' Green, it was deemed incumbent upon them to close at once their shops, for who could attend to business at such a time ? This shutting of the Bridge shops was soon done ; for most of the shutters were merely large flaps, hung on hinges to the top of the open shop fronts, and when turned up, mostly exhibited the name and calling of the inhabitant, painted in large letters thereon.

These shutter flaps were now being quickly lowered—the bolts passed through—then the master and his dame, maids, apprentices and all were seen issuing from the dwellings, and last of all, the careful master, having closed and locked the outward door, was hurrying after his family, whose anxious haste could brook no delay.

Almost the last of those who left the Bridge was Master William Hewet. On his arm hung his sweet and loving dame, wearing her newest fashioned kirtle of Stamel red, which shewed full bravely from beneath her open-fronted gown of lion colour. On her head she wore the French hood which became her mightily. Behind her walked her

pretty serving maid, with head uncovered, but whose luxuriant hair, plaited in a most coquettish style, was amply adorned with various knots of ribbon, that made her look provokingly agreeable. In her hand she held the lovely child, whom we noticed at the casement of the Golden Fleece; and after them followed the two apprentice lads.

These youths were both tall—both slim—but both strongly framed.

The one as 'fair as day, whose ingenuous open countenance bespoke nought but honour and straightforward truth—his name was Edward Osborne.

The other, Henry, 'or Harry Horton, was proud of his raven locks, and in spite of all commands, would let them grow much longer than the law prescribed, or than were ventured to be worn by any other apprentice of their ward. His eyes were sparkling bright, and black as jet; and, altogether, in spite of the apprentice garb, the blue cloth cloak, with slops and hose of white, stood out a truly handsome lad.

The manners of these two youths were as unlike as were their features. Osborne, as they walked slowly to the Southwark Green, was ever trying to amuse his master's child, by all the little acts of kindness or of childish sport his youthful fancy could devise. Not so, Harry Horton—all his attention was directed towards the Hebe of a maid, the pretty Flora Gray, who seemed, by sundry side glances, and by the manner in which she received his slyly-whispered words, to be upon a footing of vastly good understanding.

At the moment they arrived upon St. Mary Overies' Green, a thousand arrows, with whistling heads, were shot straight up into the air; this was in honour of the fixing the Maypole, which had that instant been accomplished. The trumpets sounded, the drums were beaten, wooden cannons, hooped round with iron, were discharged, to add their voices of thunder to the glorious noise.

Maidens, almost buried in flowers, had seized the long hanging floral cords which depended from the Maypole hoops, and now were dancing round and round, singing a new May-day verse, written for the occasion by Sir Filbut Fussy, and in which, at stated times, all the bystanders joined, by way of chorus; and thus it was they sang—

Maidens—"Which is the sweetest month in all the year?"

Bystanders—"Why, the merry, merry, merry, merry, merry month of May!"

Maidens—"When fall the buds' notes sweetest on the ear?"

Bystanders—"In the merry, merry, merry, merry, merry month of May!"

Upon this, twelve young girls advanced towards the seat upon which the Lord and Lady of the May were enthroned, and as they strewed May-flowers and roses before them, they also sang—

"If May be fairest—if May be sweetest—

If May be blith-time of hope, oh! then say,

Which of the months in the twelve is the meekest

To father our fair lady's own natal day?"

Then it was that the whole assembly thundered out and danced about like mad, as they exclaimed—

"Why, the merry, merry, merry, merry, merry month of May.

Oh, how merrily did they sing it—and how merrily did they dance it!—and how right merrily did Master Harry Horton appear to foot it away with the poor simple girl, Dame Hewet's maiden, Flora Gray; while Edward Osborne delighted the good merchant, by dancing and playing with his darling child, the lovely little Anne.

We shall not draw too heavily upon the patience of the gentle reader, by detailing all the good haps, nor all the mishaps, which happened upon this happy day; nor how the men in the legs of the giants became tired of their load, and getting from underneath, left the poor giants without a leg to stand on; nor how the dragon, by mistake, let off a quantity of squibs in his own inside, and made the place too hot to hold him—nor how he then tore off his own head, and walked about all the rest of the day without one—nor how the DUKE OF SHOREDITCH, King Henry's mock Duke of Archers, with all his mock Marquises, and Counts, and Earls, and merry men all, challenged the PRINCE ARTHUR, another mock, but formally-acknowledged, dignatory, with all his Knights of the round table, who had come from Mile End gorgeously attired. This band was formed of the rival archers to those of the Duke of Shoreditch; but they were merry men all, and the very best of friends; so, to show the different styles of drawing the long bow, for the solace of the crowd, the Duke of Shoreditch's party were to represent the English bowmen, while that of Prince Arthur, the archers of France.

Great merriment was caused by the vain endeavours the Frenchmen made to bend the strong English bow, for they pretended not to know the knack of the craft; so, standing bolt upright, according to the foreign fancy, their arrows all fell wofully short of the mark. Not so the English side—they, according to their country's style, all threw themselves forward a step, and thus added the whole weight of their bodies to the bending of their bows, which being done to the full extent, sent forth the arrow with unerring aim right home to the mark, at a distance of upwards of a thousand feet.

The law compelling all masters to teach their apprentices the bowman's art, a trial of skill now took place amongst these young tyros; but of this we shall give no further account, than to state how Harry Horton missed the butt every shot, and that Edward Osborne hit it no less than four times out of five; and perhaps he would have hit it the last shot, but just as he let loose his fifth shaft, a disturbance arose that had nearly put an unpleasant end to all the day's sports.

The cry of—"A witch! a witch!" resounded from a crowd of unfeeling lads hard by, who were quickly headed and encouraged by Harry Horton, to hunt a poor old woman. Useless were her feeble endeavours to escape: pushed from side to side, she screamed, and cried for mercy; but the more hopeless her state, the more the shouts and laughter increased; they bade her—"run for her life, or she should be ducked till she drowned." Harry Horton cried out—"Tie her by the legs, and drag her to the pond."

At this moment Edward Osborne dashed into the middle of the crowd, club in hand, and standing over the poor old woman, who had sunk upon the earth, he, with about three swings of his formidable weapon, in an instant cleared a space of some yards around him.—"You

cowardly curs!" exclaimed young Edward, his mild eyes now flashing fire as he spoke; "is an old woman the only game you have the courage to hunt? Now, mark me, all of you—if but one dare advance a single step, until I have raised this poor old soul, and put her in a place of safety, by my master's honour, and that's my own, I'll fell him to the ground!"

"Hollo! young champion of the *young* and *fair*," roared out Harry Horton, laughing aloud, and then added, in a savage tone, "let her alone, or we let not you alone, or if you must have a bout at fisty-cuffs, have at you." Saying this, he, with two others, who appeared to possess more courage than the rest, and who were now armed with their clubs, rushed forward upon Edward, as he was at the moment stooping down to assist the wretched woman. What might have been his fate, thus taken at disadvantage, we know not, but just, in the very nick of time, up sprang two new friends to the weaker side, and in a moment more, Horton and his valiant pals found themselves grovelling in the dust.

One of the new comers turned out to be our newly-made acquaintance, the Cripple of the Bridge, whose staff, as we have before hinted, was a trifle much more likely to make a man cry than laugh.

The other was a ragged youth, who having dexterously disarmed Harry Horton, knocked him down with his own club: the Cripple had settled the other two.

"Come, mother, come," said the ragged lad, "I knowed you'd get into trouble if you comed here."

"Take her away quickly," said Edward; "remove her while she is safe, and I, and our sturdy friend here, will keep the rabble back."

The menacing attitude of Edward and his unexpected ally, were not required to stay the fray. Now the three most daring had for a time been rendered powerless, the rest seemed little disposed to take the quarrel upon themselves; nor was the cry of "A witch, a witch!" once again repeated.

"Give me your hand," said the Cripple, addressing Edward Osborne, "I'll shake hands with *you*—but it's not every hand I would shake—but you are a brave lad, and a kind—you have a heart, and that is more than we can find in every breast; yes, you have a heart, for you will befriend the old—even the *ugly*. I would that you had a better master."

"Where shall we find one?" replied Edward; "his equal does not exist in London town."

"Good as you think him," said the Cripple, chuckling, "I shall boil his head yet," and again he laughed.

"Why," retorted Edward, shewing some disgust at what he heard, "why, I say, do you never come near my good master, nor ever hear his name, but you must utter those offensive words?"

"Time will shew, lad, time will shew," said the Cripple. "But mark me, I am your *friend*;" and then came forth his horrid screeching laugh; "there's an honour for you, lad—think of that—Willy, the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower, has condescended to call you *friend*—ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he—!" and the Cripple went hobbling off.

As Edward turned about to rejoin his master, he was accosted by the

poor ragged lad, who having found a shelter for the old woman, now returned to offer his simple, but heartfelt thanks.

After making a thousand bows and scrapes, he said—"I wish I vos a gentleman born and bred—for then I would ask to take your hand, and if I did, I think I should squeeze a part of my heart into it, I am so grateful for what you have done to-day. That poor old woman, Master Edward, for I knows who you are vel enough, is my old mother, and I love her more than my life, for a kinderer hearted, blessedder creature, I don't think even Heaven itself ever made."

"Well, then," said Edward, smiling, "if you promise not to squeeze your heart into it—there are two reasons why I will give you my hand; first, because a lad who loves his mother, as you seem to do, cannot be a bad fellow at bottom; the second, because I owe you much more thanks than you do me. I know the spite of my scowling brother apprentice there, who has just sneaked off, and who is now whispering to those two ill-looking fellows. Had he but had his way while his rage was up, I doubt me little but he would have solved that dubious point in natural history, of whether I have, or have not, any brains in my stupid head; for he'd have cracked it or his own club, I'll swear. I know him, and I know, too, that I have given him mortal offence by my good luck with the long bow. But I fear him not; for he knows I've shown him more than once whose arm is the stronger. But tell me, who and what are you, since you know who I am?"

"Vy," replied the lad, "I'm not exactly a prince, as you may see with half an eye, nor am I a beggar; that is, not a licensed one. Oh no! a poor devil like me has no interest with the Court to get such a blessing as a King's warrant for begging; so, if I does try the trade now and then just a lectle, I'm obliged to do it on the sly, in a sort of smuggling way. I keeps open house at the foot of Old Swan Lane, and the more fiends that comes to see me, the better I likes it, and lots of lords, and ladies, and nobles does come to see me, I can tell you, and takes me by the arm. Vy, I've been the support of hundreds on 'em."

"Speak more plainly, there's a good fellow," said Edward, not at all comprehending what the lad could possibly mean.

"Vy, you see, how they owes their support to me is this—I keeps a board for 'em to valk on from the shore to their boats."

"Oh, I understand you now," said Edward; "you are a Jack-in-the water."

"Yes," replied the other, "I'm a Jack-in-the-vorter, but I'm a Villiam out on it."

"Then your name, I suppose, is William," inquired Osborne; "but have you no other?"

"To be sure I have; I've three names altogether," replied the lad; "I'm Jack—I'm Villiam—and I'm BILLY THE BRIDGE-SHOOTER!" The last he uttered with evident feelings of pride.

"Billy the Bridge-shooter! that's an odd name," observed Edward; "how came you by that?"

"You see," said the other, "almost all men in this world excels in summut, only it's not always found out vot that summut is;—now me summut vos found out almost as soon as I vos born."

"Indeed! and pray what might it be?"

"Vy, I vos born corky."

"What!" exclaimed Edward, completely taken by surprise.

"Vot! vy, corky. You knows vot a cork is, I suppose? Vell, then, I vos born corky—that is, I'm so uncommon light, that if you throws me into the vorter, old Nick himself can't make me sink."

"Your definition of the term," said Edward, smiling, as well he might, "is perfectly satisfactory; although, I must confess, without your elucidation, I should never have guessed at the meaning: but may I ask you," and Edward again smiled, "may I ask how your *corkiness* was first discovered; for surely you did not, as your words would almost imply, go swimming the moment you were born?"

"Didn't I, though! but indeed I did—that is, afore I vos a week old. I'll tell you how it happened; and, my viskers!—only I haven't got none—if I hadn't been born corky, I shouldn't a been here now to tell you vot I'm going to tell you, I can tell you. Vell then—mother vos ill in bed, and fast asleep. Father vcs a blind man, but uncommon clever in household concerns, and always looked arter—nd, I don't mean that; for if he vos blind, you know, he couldn't look arter nothing: but he used to attend to the cooking—and such a cook he vos—"

"But if he were blind," said Edward, "how could he see which things he wanted?"

"Oh, that vos easy enough! he used to stick his finger into all the things vun arter the other, and suck it, until he comed to the vun he wanted. Now, he and mother were dotingly-fond of boiled sucking-pig; and on the day I'm speaking on, father, who had been drinking a leetle more than he ought to have done, and had made me drink a leetle drop too, just to keep me quiet while he vos at his cooking, laid me down dead asleep on the table, by the side of the pig: off he goes—back he comes vith the only saucepan ve had, which vos an uncommon large 'un—fills it half full of vorter—pops it on the fire—pops me into it, instead of the pig, and then pops on the lid. As I happened to go in flat on my back, there I floated safe enough, for nothing *can* make me sink. By-and-by, as you may suppose, the vorter began to get rather too vorm to be pleasant; and then, oh, my viskers! didn't I begin to bawl, and kick about? Off vent the lid—splash went the vorter—mother began to scream out that the devil vos in the pot—in rushed the neighbours to larn the cause of such alarm; when, fortunately, vun on 'em, happening to be a priest, who didn't care for the devil or all his imps, volked boldly up to the saucepan, and took me out, to the astonishment of all. It vos soon settled, that I had been bevitched, and changed, for a time, into a pig—the real vun the priest took away vith him to his own house, declaring that—'He vould first roast the evil fiend,' as he called the pig, 'and then dewour it;' and ve have every reason to believe he did. And now, master Edward, do you think I am wrong in saying I vos born corky. It's because I'm corky, I'm called the Bridge-shooter. Ven a boatman's afraid to go through by himself, vy, I shoots through vith him. If I happens to shoot him into the vorter, vy, I shoots in arter him, and picks him up, for nothing

can make me sink. By-the-by, a thought has just struck me—can you swim?"

"Not like a fish!" said Edward; "unless, indeed, it be like a flat one, which is generally found at the bottom of the river. No, I have often tried, but always to but little purpose."

"That," replied Billy the Bridge-shooter, "is because you have never been properly taught. Now, vill you make me downright happy?"

"How can I do that?" said young Osborne.

"Vy, let me larn you to keep your head above vorter—it's an uncommon useful hart. You have saved my old mother's life, and do, now, let me teach you to save your own, and, may be, a hundred others. It is not much a poor fellow like me can do, to the like o'you, to show his gratitude; but, poor as I am in all else, if you comes to the swimming, I'm richer than any Lord I knows. In a single veek, you shall be as corky as I am."

"Well, I must confess," said Edward, "that is a temptation not easily to be withstood; and, upon one condition, I accept your offer—you must let me pay you for it."

"You've paid me afore hand all I means to take," replied the other. "No, no, swim for love; and pay me, if you likes, for any other little artful *dot* I may teach you."

The expression, "*dot*," he evidently used in the manner we, nowadays, employ that elegant little word, "*dodge*;" but we have no doubt that, to the "*gens*" of those days, it was equally expressive and intelligible.

Edward Osborne, who felt a pity for the poor ragged lad, on account of the filial affection he had so strongly evinced, and fancying he could discover beneath the dense soil of ignorance, a seed or two, that might, by a little culture, grow up into good, suddenly took into his head the romantic idea of adopting the outcast as his son, notwithstanding the said outcast was at least a couple of years older than himself. But at the romantic age at which Edward Osborne then found himself, what wildness of fancy could be too extravagant to be seized upon as the oilspring of the profoundest wisdom?

For ourselves, we love romance; it is the bright star of our life—the child of hope that takes us by the hand, and leads our steps as sweetly on through this world's bleak and barren paths, as though they were formed on velvet moss, and lay midst beds of roses.

Having the romantic fit strongly upon us at this instant, we do not find it at all difficult to forgive young Osborne, for the folly, as the ice-bound intellects of common-sense people would call it, of the plan he had just formed. He had thought of a way to repay his new *protégé* for any trouble he might give him, which he hoped, and fully expected, would prove of more real service to this Jack-in-the-water, than even money itself. The fate of all these grand schemes will be seen as we proceed; at present, we shall merely inform our gentle readers, that it was soon arranged, to the great delight and perfect satisfaction of Billy the Bridge-shooter, that, every morning at daybreak, young Osborne should take his swimming lesson.

With this understanding, they separated; Jack-o'-the-water was soon lost in the crowd, and Edward hastened to rejoin his master and mistress.

The moment he came within sight of them, he perceived that something had gone amiss; his master looked angrily—his mistress snatched back the child, who had made a movement, as if to run and meet her playmate—and as to Flora Gray, she tossed her nose up in the air, at least a yard, when he offered her his arm, and, turning her back suddenly upon him, said—"Go to your villains!—we want none of your company here!" And then, with another toss of the head, and another turn up of the nose, away she walked.

Poor Osborne, who, in spite of all his endeavours, had never yet been able to ingratiate himself fully into the good favour of his mistress, saw, now, by her looks, that he was, from some cause or other, lower than ever in her estimation.

The truth was, that Harry Horton had been beforehand, and made his own story good, by reversing the whole facts of the case. Tears actually came into Horton's eyes, as he related Osborne's cruel turn of mind, that could feel delight in afflicting the aged and infirm: but what, he said, made his heart quite bleed, was, to see so respectable a youth, as young Osborne had formerly been, now falling into the lowest degradation, by associating with the vilest of the vile. "Why does he not," he continued, "do as I do?—why does he not associate more with the good father of St. Thomas-of-the-Bridge, instead of always being with such thieves as that lad who attends the boats at the Swan-stairs? they are always together—always! And only to think, now, as if it were just to prove my words—look there, yonder, in the distance, you can see them both—but, alas! they are always together. Good heavens!" he ejaculated, as if a sudden thought had seized him; and, then continuing, as though he had been merely thinking aloud—"But, no, no! that cannot be!—and, yet——"

"Yet, what?" exclaimed Alyce, with anxiety, "speak plainly; for myself, I have always doubted the sincerity of young Osborne; the more so since our saintly father, Brassinjaw, first pointed out to me that such unceasing propriety of conduct and such unvarying attention to his every duty, formed an unerring proof of inward hypocrisy!"

"If that be the case, dear Alyce," said the merchant, who had a far less exalted opinion of the saintly father, Brassinjaw, than his wife had, "if that be the case, I suppose that *impropriety* of conduct, and *inattention* to ones every duty bespeak the saint—is this the reason father Brassinjaw is so very saintly?"

"Such difficult questions, husband, we must leave to the wise and learned; sinful creatures like ourselves, should never meddle with such deep matters," replied the truly-good, but simple-minded Alyce. "I fear me often, William, that the new and dangerous opinions, which, however I try to close my ears to, will still at times force themselves upon me, have found a grateful soil in your unguarded mind. If once I thought that that arch fiend, as saintly father Brassinjaw rightly calls Martin Luther——"

"For mercy sake, Alyce, do let Martin Luth. be still and tell me, Harry, what are your fears?" This the poor merchant said merely to

change the thoughts and stop the tongue of Dame Alyce upon the interminable subject of Martin Luther.

"Why," said Harry Horton, "it suddenly flashed across my mind, seeing what I have just witnessed—but Heaven grant I may be wrong—but, I say, it suddenly flashed across my mind that it was within the pale of possibility, that Edward and that ragged ruffian might be found to know more of the robbery at my good master's house, and for which a poor fellow, whom I sincerely believe to be as innocent as I am, is now in jail, and should the trial go against him, will be hanged. You know," he continued, "that it was Edward who first discovered the robbery, which had been so ingeniously contrived, that little short of inspiration, or previous knowledge of what was to be done, could have detected it. He was ever the enemy of the poor fellow now in prison, and the sworn friend of the only witness upon whose evidence the life of the accused will hang. Now, putting this and that together, it strikes me that much truth might be elicited—" here his countenance assumed a truly demoniacal expression, but it vanished almost as soon as seen, as he said, "could you obtain permission but for a few minutes to put him to the rack?"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the merchant, indignantly. "What! give the son of my oldest and best of friends to the torture, for the sake of a paltry piece or two of cloth of gold? Rather would I toss the whole contents of the Golden Fleece into the Thames!"

"And why?" retorted Dame Alyce; "as saintly Father Brassinjaw truly says—" all means should be tried to bring a sinner to repentance."

"I only spoke for the best, master," said Horton; "and I am sorry, now, I have spoken at all; forget what I have said—I dare say I am wrong—and no doubt a friendly squeeze of the hand means any thing but familiarity." As he said this, he pointed rather insolently towards the distance, exactly at the moment Edward was giving his hand to the grateful ragged lad. "I shall live an enviable life when he shall come to know all I have said."

"But he shall know nothing of what you have said," replied Alyce; "you are a good youth and a worthy, and shall not be exposed to the ill will of any one. You know I am always your friend; and your master will not gainsay my pleasure, I am certain; so do not fear him, for not a word shall he hear from either of us; but we will keep a watchful eye upon him, be assured. Now, Henry, go and join the merry-makers."

"No, mistress," he replied; "I will home to my little room, and prepare myself for to-morrow's confession."

As he retired, he looked first at Alyce, then sighed gently, and casting his eyes up to heaven, he looked once more, then wended his way towards the bridge. What he intended by the look, the sigh, and the upturning of his eyes, we for the present can only guess; but that there was something strange in his manner of doing it, might be inferred from the involuntary, but transient blush which suddenly suffused the lovely face of Alyce—so slight, indeed, had been the cause which made the rose to bloom where the lily had been planted, that she herself was still unconscious of the fleeting change.

Poor Flora Gray looked after him in vain : he seemed to have forgotten that such a person had ever existed ; she blushed too, but her blush was felt, was understood, and with it came a frown, for she was angered at his neglect ; this it was, perhaps, which greatly heightened the asperity of manner she had evinced towards Edward, when he had approached with a heart overflowing with kindness and goodwill towards all human beings.

As Harry Horton hurried along, he let loose to his ill feelings in low murmurings. "So, sq!" said he; "I think I have sown some seeds this day in Master Osborne's path, that shall ere long grow up and bear a plenteous harvest of poisonous thorns. He seems born to be my rock-a-head. Although years younger than I am, he is still the stronger. In all things he ever takes the lead ; but I may have my revenge yet. One month more, and I am no longer an apprentice : if I can but once get a footing in partnership with Master Hewet, I'll work his heart out. I have found out the length of our mistress's foot, thanks to the gluttony and licentiousness of *sainly* Father Brassinjaw, who, when the wine is in, would, for an extra flagon of Rhenish, or a yard of our master's cloth of gold to give to some fair sinner he would sanctify, tell me all the secrets of all the wives in Christendom, did he but know them. There is not a failing of either Hewet or his sweet-eyed dame that are not in my keeping ; and it is upon the failings, not the virtues of mankind, the crafty work their will: "How lovely Alyce looked to-day ! but she has too much of the saint, and too little of the woman about her at present ; but they say a reformation is at hand, so who knows !" and then he laughed at his own thoughts. "I wish," he went on, "that simpleton, Flora Gray, would be less fond. I only flirted with her because I thought she could worm out her mistress's secrets ; and now, forsooth, she thinks I'm over head and ears in love with her, and looks to be my wife—ha, ha ! a pretty wife for Harry Horton ! I want no wife—at least of my own. No, no ! I want fame and fortune ; and I'll have them, or the gallows."

As the sable wings of night began to flutter over the gay and glittering scene on Mary Overies' Green, preparations commenced for the more wild and reckless sports by the flickering and varying light of innumerable bonfires. All along the road from the Green, and down the High-street of Southwark, as far as the eye could reach, these ancient demonstrations of holiday delight might be seen blazing ; barrels of pitch, and indeed every combustible material the crowd could conveniently lay their hands on, were heaped upon these burning signs of merry-making.

The High-street of Southwark was at that time composed principally of large inns, capable of accommodating hundreds of guests ; both man and horse found shelter there. The most notorious was the Tabard, opposite St. Margaret's Hill, the well-known inn at which Chaucer and his pilgrims to Canterbury slept the night before they started on their holy journey. It was before this inn now burned the largest bonfire of the whole, and around it danced the biggest crowd of madcap maids and boys.

As time flew on, the more sober-minded citizens, one by one, with their dames and children, left this wild but highly picturesque scene of frantic revelry.

Then the moon arose, but, as if ashamed of what she saw, passed on majestically, and soon was lost to mortal sight. The Spirit of Fatigue next sent forth her enervating breath across the plain; the strongest, however reluctantly, were soon subdued, and laggingly strolled homeward to their welcome beds. The fires themselves seemed tired out at the roaring life they had led, and sinking by degrees became, what all things that have lived must become—dust. A few poor worn out wretches, too poor to own a home, huddled themselves around the dying embers, and soon, by sleep's great alchemy, became the lords and princes of the earth. Thus ended that merry May-day on Mary Overies' lovely Green.

CHAPTER II.

There saw I first the dark imagining
Of Felony—and all the compassing;
The cruel ire, red as any glede;
The pick-purse, and eke the pale drede
Conteke with bloody knife, and sharp menace:
All full of chirkung was that sorry place.—CHAUCER.

AFTER the moon had descended on the night of our May-day, thick clouds overspread the heavens, and all around was dark and drear. The cataracts beneath the bridge were at their greatest fall, and came down thundering and raging, as though Old Father Thames was struggling to dash in pieces the mighty chain which Peter of Colechurch had thrown across him, and which now was chafing him to madness. There are few sounds more appalling to mortal ears than that of raging waters heard in darkness, it seems like the voice of Desolation calling upon Death!

The old bell of St. Paul's had just proclaimed that the twelfth hour of night was dead and had passed away for ever, when a little glimmering light might be perceived issuing from the small opening to be found in the basement of Master Hewet's house, which stood exactly over the fifth arch, counting from the right-hand side of our large plate of Old London Bridge—then for a moment it was obscured—then it shone forth again: and now might be faintly discerned the shadowy form of a man descending by a rope upon the sterling beneath—it was Harry Horton!

Taking from his breast a small silver tube, he placed it to his lips and sent forth one long shrill whistle; but, loud as it was, it could scarcely be heard above the falling waters, that seemed to be laughing in derision at the puny effort; and yet it must have reached the intended ear, for instantly a window over the centre of the sixth arch opened, and another rope was let down, at the end of which was fastened a small ship lantern; this was wavered from side to side, further and further, until it reached the hand of Horton, who, twisting the end of the rope round his wrist, with a determined bound swung across the flood, and landed upon the opposite sterling. From this sterling a rude ladder, led to the house above. Before he mounted, he said to the man who was looking down upon him—"Has he come?"

"Not yet," was the reply; "but he cannot now be long. There are some half dozen merry blades here; so up, and be as merry as they."

Horton ascended, and once more found himself in the well-known lower drinking-room of the "Cardinal's Hat," the public of worst repute upon the bridge.

Amongst the half dozen ill-looking fellows who sat around a large flaggon of sweet ale, mixed with ardent spirits, was one, who had better, for his own credit, have been elsewhere—it was no less a personage than the saintly Father Brassinjaw! This right reverend gentleman generally found some excuse for passing a few hours every night in this receptacle of vice—but, he said, "it was his duty to seek out the vicious—the good could take care of themselves: where vice was, he would ever be found." And he might have added, that where he was found, vice surely was.

It was at these midnight meetings that Horton used to gather from this drunken priest the secrets of all his neighbours, and which he treasured up, intending, as time should serve, to turn them to his own account.

The excuse father Brassinjaw made for being there this evening, was that he had seen the newsman come in; and that he, like all the dwellers on the bridge, was anxious to learn the real cause of their recent alarm.

Before newspapers were invented, there were certain men who made it their sole employ to go about collecting news, which, for a very small consideration they retailed out to the curiously inclined. The more respectable of the order, and who could write, gained a very fair living by sending news-sheets to the castles and country mansions of such as they could get to be their regular customers—the poorer sort, like the one now in the Cardinal's Hat, merely ran from pot-house to pot-house, repeating what they had heard during the day—and some times much which they had not heard.

Just as Horton entered, the newsman, a ragged, unwashed fellow, was standing in the midst of the dirty room, relating what was pretty nearly the truth—that—how he had just come from Greenwich, where there had been a tournament—and how that the King's Highness was there, and Nan Bullen too (for so the common people usually called the Queen), and how her brother Lord Rochford and Harry Norris fought—and that how Nan dropped her kerchief, and how Norris took it up and kissed it, pretending to wipe his face—and how the King, swearing a dreadful oath, jumped up, and mounting his horse, galloped off to London, attended only by six gentlemen—and how Rochford, and Norris, and Sir Francis Western were all arrested—and that how Nan Bullen fainted, and how it was said that all was a planned thing against Nan, because the King had a liking for Jenny Seymour—and that how she would be Queen, and Nan be burnt to death.

"And serve her right" roared out Brassinjaw, in rather an unsteady voice;—"she's a heretic, and deserves to be burnt; and so I would have told the King to his face, had I seen him go by."

"Neither you, nor any man living, had dared to wag a tongue," said the host, "had you seen him. As black as thunder is virgin snow

compared to his look ; and he came upon us, too, so unawares, that not a soul upon the bridge, save Master Hewet, who's always sure to be on the right side of the hedge—no, not one of us flopped down upon our knees as he went past. I hope the not bending of our knees may not prove the breaking of our pecks."

The discourse was here put an end to, as far as Horton was concerned, by the entrance of the man he had been so anxiously awaiting ; the man took no notice of any one there save Horton, to whom he made a sign, and lifting up the trap-door, they both descended to the sterling beneath the arch of the bridge.

"Well," said Horton, "have you seen him?"

"I have," replied the other, "a white livered cur, as he is! Why, he has no more pluck than a linnet; he's crying and blubbering in his cell, and swears rather than die, he'll hang us all—a nice friend that, isn't he? So beautifully as you had planned the robbery too, it must have fallen upon Osborne; and then for that bungling fool to get us all into this mess—I could hardly keep my paws quiet as I looked at him."

"It is useless railing thus—what is to be done?" said Horton: "I thought that if he were once executed, we were all safe enough; but if he means to peach——"

"Why, they'll hang us up like rats," said the other; "there have been too many robberies of late, for 'em to let one of us escape. Now, his plan is this—he swears that he will not speak out until the last moment—so that if we put Wallace, the weaver, out of the way—in short he means murder him—there is no other evidence that can scrag our cowardly friend: Osborne ought not to appear, but his evidence does not carry death with it, and it is death only that Miles so fears."

"I will provide for Osborne, somehow or other," said Horton: "but as to murdering the weaver, I don't like it—a man's blood they say never dries up—and it's an awkward sight to be always seeing the red spot dancing before one's eyes."

"Necessity, even the priests confess, has no law," retorted the other; "and besides, if we do take one life, we save another, so that strikes the balance—doesn't it? and I'll answer for it, that Father Brassinjaw won't be over hard upon us, at confession, if we do the handsome. You keep your word about young Osborne, and I'll manage all else so gently that the weaver shall never say who hurt him. Either he, or we must die; that's an argument that doesn't require much debating. If we do kill him, where can be the sin? we do it to save ourselves—and self-preservation is the first law of nature—'fast bind, fast find,' remember that."

After several plans had been proposed by Horton, short of murder, and rejected by his companion, they parted, Horton, as a sort of excuse to his own conscience, continuing up to the last to affirm, that he would never assent to the taking of life, but inwardly hoping all the while, that his own safety might yet be secured, by the other resting upon his own head the whole weight and guilt of shedding innocent blood.

A few minutes more, and Horton had again twisted the rope round

his wrist—again had leaped the raging torrent, and once more had crept in through the window of his sleeping-room. Being there he began at once to carry out his quickly-formed plan regarding Osborne. In this unhallowed work we will leave him awhile, and glance into the chamber of his fellow apprentice.

Poor Osborne, who until this night had never known what it was to be awake scarcely a moment after his head had been placed upon his pillow, for his mind had ever been at peace, now found himself restless and uneasy. Sleep fled his couch that night—or if she came near, it was but to mock him with her shadow, and then pass away.

Osborne could in no way account for the strange coolness of his master, and the undisguised displeasure of his mistress—even the smiling Flora Gray had now no smile for him.

“Why should I worry myself,” he said—“why annoy myself thus about a circumstance of which I cannot even guess the cause? In the morning I will ask my master openly what I have done to offend him. And only to think now, all my clever plans about diving, swimming, and——” for a moment the shadow of sleep flitted before his eyes in forms fantastic. He felt that he was not asleep—and yet, strange dreamings seized upon his senses. Now he fancied he was the greatest swimmer in the world—now he was floating upon the surface of the flood, gazing up into the bright sunny heavens—there he saw his master’s lovely child—then a hand seemed to seize and drag him to the bottom of the river—here old Father Thames accosting him as his own son, told him “to care for nought on earth but to trust in him!” Then taking him by the hand, he shewed the vast treasures he had been hoarding up for centuries—there were gold, and silver, and sparkling jewels; and in the midst he again saw his master’s child—then she vanished, but the treasure remained, and Father Thames said, “All these, my son, I will give to thee—but thou must love me—must——!” The vision was no more. Osborne again finding himself tossing and turning about on his uneasy couch, said, “I wonder why our master has this night, for the first time, taken the keys of the outer door into his own room; at all events it shews he no longer intends to let his apprentices go in and out as early as they like. The Bridge-shooter will wait in vain in Southwark for his pupil—well, I cannot help it—I will at once abandon the idea altogether—many a man—has—lived long enough—who—could—not—sw—im.” He was again in a doze, and again was his former vision floating through his troubled brain.

It was strange, but at the very moment he had thus given up all thoughts of being able to meet the Bridge-shooter, other agents were unconsciously at work to bring about that very meeting. Osborne had this time slept so long that Aurora was preparing to set her foot upon the threshold of the day—when just as he was dreaming for the hundredth time, that Father Thames was taking him by the hand, he seemed made suddenly conscious that a real hand was on his shoulder; he felt himself violently shaken, and opening his eyes he started up in his bed, bewildered and astonished, for there he beheld his master with a lamp in his hand standing by his bedside.

“Hush!” said the merchant, placing his finger upon his lip; “get up

quickly, but silently. I have an affair requiring haste, and secrecy. Take this letter to where it is addressed—take this money, too, for you must hire a boat. Your further instructions will be given you at the end of your journey. There is the key of the outward door. The moment you are dressed, begone—but mind you make no noise; I would have none here, not even my wife, know of your going until you be fairly gone.” Saying this the merchant extinguished the lamp, and then left the room. Osborne listened almost breathlessly, as he heard the merchant descending stealthily down the stairs: in a moment all was still as death.

“Well,” said Edward, almost in a whisper, as if fearing to break the spell, “this is the strangest dream of all—for I could swear that I am awake;” he rubbed his eyes as he said, “and yet this is certainly my room—there is the window through which the grey tint of morn is peeping. But these,” he continued, and he looked with astonishment, for in his hands he could see the letter and the key, and before him on the bed lay the purse of money. “No, no, it is no dream: but what can it all mean? No matter—it is my duty to obey, not trouble myself about my master’s motives—‘quickly and silently,’ he said—he shall be obeyed. A mouse shall make more noise than I—a swallow travel less quickly.”

A few, a very few minutes saw Osborne fully prepared. He placed the letter and the purse carefully in his pouch, and with the key in one hand and his shoes in the other, that his footfall should make no noise, the apprentice now descended the stairs as stealthily as the merchant had done a few minutes before.

Although Osborne placed the key in the lock with all the care of a professed housebreaker, yet the lock would creak, and the hinges of the door seemed to say—“Where there is secrecy there is guilt.” At all events Osborne felt uncomfortable for the moment, nor did he quite recover his composure until he had hurried on nearly half across the bridge. Every house was closed, and the heavy dewdrops hung like tears upon the gay flowers of yesterday, and now weighed down their heads, as if in grief at the day of sorrow about to break upon one, the fairest of the land. All looked cold, dark, and wretched. As he approached the Southwark end of the bridge, he fancied he heard the sound of a lute, as if descending from the skies; but his head was so full of his late fantastic dream, and the strange visit of his master, that he at first believed it to be but the creation of an overheated imagination—but no! at every step the sound increased. He had now gained the opening of the Bridge-gate Tower, adorned as it then was by the withering heads of those who had fallen, sacrificed to the hate or vengeance of a blood-thirsty tyrant.

The sound of the lute suddenly ceased, and Osborne started in actual affright; for in the uncertain light of the coming day, he fancied he saw one of the heads descend from the tall spike on which it had stood, and then gaze down upon him from over the parapet of that tower of death. In a moment more, and the sound of his own name struck upon his ear. “It is well,” said the voice from the tower, “it is well; but whither goest thou *this way*?”

Edward for an instant stood spell-bound, but was soon relieved from his fright by hearing the well-known screeching laugh of the Cripple of the Bridge. "Be not afraid, lad—it is I, thy *friend*, here snug at home, surrounded by my children," and he pointed up to the ghastly heads; "they are poor quiet souls now, and give but little trouble to any one. But tell me, whither goest thou?"

"I know not, Willy," replied Osborne, at once recovering himself, and now remembering that in his hurry to obey his master's commands, he had taken the worst of all methods of doing so, for he had forgotten to answer the address upon the letter; he drew it forth, and was about to answer the Cripple's question, when his master's injunction recurred to him: "quickly and *silently*," he murmured; then aloud he said—"I cannot tell thee, Willy—that is, I *must not*—so fare thee well."

"Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he—!" laughed the Cripple. "Right, boy, right, do as the world does; turn your back upon your friends when you don't want them." Osborne had turned to retrace his steps, finding his orders indicated an opposite direction.

"Go thy way in peace," said the Cripple; "thou hast my blessing—all is ready for thee; he has been waiting an hour past; if you would be safe, be quick."

Osborne, scarcely heeding what the other said, started at a run, nor did he cease his rapid course until he found himself at the Old Swan Stairs. Now he was more astonished than ever, for there stood Billy-the-bridge-shooter, anxiously waiting in one of the best boats, and ready to push off at a moment's notice. "Be quick, Master Edward," said the lad; "it is broad daylight, and we should have been a couple of miles above bridge ere this."

Edward jumped into the boat; the Bridge-shooter pushed off into the middle of the stream, then seizing the oars, plied them so effectually, that in a minute more they were well upon their course.

Osborne looked back upon the bridge, and there plainly saw the Cripple running from one to the other, shaking all the tall poles with their ghastly heads upon them, as if in token of his approval at Edward's departure. "It will be a heavy pull, Master Edward," said the lad, "when the tide turns; for it's more nor a mile, I guess, to Putney, isn't it?"

"Putney!" said Osborne, surprised; "how knew you I was thither bound?"

"Vy, didn't you tell me so," replied the other; "that is, the boy you sent with the money, did."

"I sent no boy, nor money either!"

"Didn't you, though! Vell, then, how could I a hired this boat, do you think, if you had not? And how could I a guessed that I vos to be at the Swan-stairs, instead of the Southwark side, as ve settled; and vos then to row you to Putney?"

"As you seem to know more of my affairs than I do myself," said Osborne, "perhaps, too, you can tell me to *whom* I am going?"

"To be sure I can," was the reply; "ve're a going to old daddy Cromvell, Lord Thomas's father—the blacksmith that vos—the brewer yet is, and precious nice ale he does brew—there's no pizen in that; no, no; all pure malt—no hops there; no, nor no brimstone neither."

It appears almost incredible that a time could ever have been when hops, so highly valued now, so carefully trained and cultured in our days, for the sole purpose of adding value to our far-famed London porter, were considered a vile adulteration, and laws were actually passed making it a heavy crime for brewers to mix either *hops* or brimstone with their malt.

It was evident to Osborne, although inexplicable how it could have, or why it had, occurred, that a messenger had been sent to his new acquaintance, and by some one who appeared to know both his movements, as well as the intentions and wishes of his master. Expecting that some of the mystery would be cleared up when he should have reached Putney, he, for the present, determined to dismiss the perplexing subject from his mind.

The sun was now shining out magnificently, and as Billy-the-bridge-shooter, had already had a good pull, Osborne, who was himself no bad waterman, now insisted upon taking his turn at the oars. His attempt gained great praise from his companion, who declared, "that if he would but feather his oars a *leettle* more, there were few commoners" (by which he meant not professed watermen) "who could beat him."

Praise is ever sweet, come from what quarter it may, and ever proves, although the gentlest, still the strongest goad to exertion, mentally or bodily; so Edward, being praised, pulled away harder than ever, and soon they found themselves at Chelsea, opposite the old church, which is still standing near the present Battersea bridge, then a ferry.

It now struck them, for the first time, that they had had no breakfast; but Billy had not forgotten what they might want, so steering to the Battersea side, they landed in the fields, and were soon seated upon the luxuriant grass, discussing the contents of a certain basket the Bridge-shooter had drawn from the stern of the boat. They rested here nearly an hour; and it was here that the Bridge-shooter acquainted Osborne with his old mother's peculiar fancy for being considered a witch—it was a dangerous fancy in those days.—"But," as he said, "all human beings have their weak pints, and this is hers. It makes her happy, poor old soul, so I lets her have her vay; but it costs me an uncommon deal of trouble to keep her out of harm. But don't think, Master Edward, that she's a real witch; Lord bless you, no! she's no more a witch than I'm a conjuror, and I don't think I'm much of that."

After they had thoroughly rested themselves, nothing would satisfy William, as Osborne now called the Bridge-shooter, but he must give the apprentice some idea of what swimming was. In a few minutes more, and he was in Adam's native garb, and floating like a fish upon the silver Thames. First he swam on one side, then on the other—then he turned over head and heels, and performed a thousand strange antics; now his head was above the water, now his heels—and now he disappeared altogether. At last he said—"Master Edward, pick up a stone that you will know again, and chuck it as far as ever you can into the vorter."

Osborne did as he was directed, and having a strong arm, the stone flew an enormous distance before it fell into the stream.

William kept his eye steadfastly fixed upon the spot where it had descended, and swimming there, disappeared beneath the tide.

So long did he remain under the water, that Osborne at last became dreadfully alarmed; he hurried to the boat, not knowing what to do for the best, when, just as he was putting his foot upon it—not more than three yards from him, up rose the lad, with the large stone held between his teeth.

"There, Master Edward, you see I can swim as well with my head under water as above it. You see I went down there, and I came up here; that's not I call swimming: and you shall do all that too, in less nor a week, or my name's not William."

The Bridge-shooter now insisted upon Osborne commencing his lessons that very hour; and while he was preparing, he said—"Remember, all men are much more corky than they think; and it's not so easy to sink, as you imagine. To keep your head above water, keep your arms under it. When you want to dive, stick your chin into your chest; and when you want to come up again, throw your head back, and up you pop. Strike well out with your arms, your legs, and feet, all at once, and never be afraid—it's fear that drowns a man, not the water. Now, I'll lead you gently out into deep water; turn your face right up to the skies, and you will see how easy it is to float as upright as a dart."

So much confidence had Edward in his instructor, that he obeyed him implicitly; and, to his infinite satisfaction, he found all the lad had told him come to pass. Before they quitted the water, Osborne had made such progress, that he now could not only keep himself afloat, but also felt, that that element which had formerly been his greatest dread, would, by this newly-acquired art, ere long, become one of his chief delights.

So pleased was Osborne with the advance he had made, and so charmed was the instructor with his own cleverness in teaching, and his pupil's aptness in learning, that both entered their boat in the highest state of mutual satisfaction.

Having safely conveyed them to Putney, where old Walter Cromwell received Edward with a hearty welcome, telling him, that all his old friend Hewet desired in his letter should be done; and having given orders to make Edward's humble friend comfortable for that night, we must there leave them for awhile, and return once more to OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

CHAPTER III.

What needeth it, therefore, to sermon more?
For right, as they had cast his death before,
Right, so they have him slain.—CHAUCER.

MORE than a week had now passed away, and young Osborne's absence had scarcely been noticed in the house of Master Hewet. There seemed to be an implied understanding that his name was not to be mentioned. The merchant had told his dame that he had sent him upon a little business, and it would have been unbecoming in a dutiful wife, like

Alyce Hewet, to have ventured further question. Horton chuckled at his own supposed cleverness, believing he knew, even better than the merchant, where Edward really was, so never broached the subject. The little Anne was the only one who evinced any sorrow at his long absence; but she was easily pacified, when her father foretold her play-mate's speedy return.

As the day for the trial of Miles, the robber, drew near, Horton became more and more nervous: he thought, that if Wallace, the weaver, had been found *missing*, which his guilty soul translated, *murdered*! his master must have been apprised of it, ere this, and could not have kept such a circumstance a secret; nor, indeed, would there have been any cause, on his part, for secrecy.

For several nights past Harry Horton had waited for hours in the lower drinking-room of the "Cardinal's Hat," but the man with whom he there met before, came not. On the last night but one before the trial, his anxiety had reached a pitch of the greatest mental suffering. His lips had become ashy pale—the skin peeled off with fever. He scarcely spoke a word while in this den of vice, but kept his eyes riveted upon the door. Every time a new comer entered, he started up; then finding himself again disappointed, he sat down more moodily than ever, biting his fevered lips until they bled. Continually did he keep muttering to himself—"Something must be wrong—something must be wrong." Hour after hour passed away; the great bell of St. Paul continued to tell how fleeting were the minutes of man's life—it seemed to his excited mind to be ever striking—and yet he came not. At last a heavy foot was heard descending the stairs—the door flew open, and there the long-expected villain stood. The name this worthy bore amongst his pals was Blare-eyed Bully; he had gained this inelegant, but truly appropriate appellation, from his reckless bearing, and from the circumstance of his eyes protruding to a truly frightful and unnatural extent.

"What, in the devil's name," said Horton, unable, at the moment, to govern his temper, "has kept you so long away?"

"What, in the devil's name," retorted the other, "caused you to send your bloodhounds on a wrong scent? But this is no place to talk of our affairs." Not waiting a reply, he lifted the trapdoor, and, followed by Horton, descended to their former place of conference.

"Did you not tell me, that in the letter you were to place mysteriously in your master's way, to alarm him for Osborne's safety, you would propose, as the best place to send the boy for security, would be to the house of his uncle at Woolwich, where we could easily secure him, and place him under hatches, aboard of our smuggling boat?"

"I did! and the boy is gone."

"And the boy has never been there," said the other, sneeringly.

"Not there! then where is he?" exclaimed Horton, with evident surprise.

"That's what I've come to ask of you," rejoined the other; and then went on in a more savage tone, "I hate half measures: if you bite, bite to the bone! I like not your mincing morsels. If he was to be put out of our way, why, put him out at once, say I. The weaver too,

thanks to your notable scheme of alarming the merchant. Why, idiot that you are, if Hewet became fearful for the safety of one witness, did it not follow, that he would be equally so for that of the other? and so he was: and that cursed weaver had nearly escaped us—he, too, had been sent away to a place of security, as they thought it; but the Blare-eyed Bully was not to be tricked so easily—no, no, we traced him out, and——”

“You’ve murdered him!” exclaimed Horton, trembling.

“That’s my business,” rejoined the other: “what I promise to do, I do. You undertook to look after Osborne—do it! for I wash my hands of him. Go into court with a bold face: all will go well, if you but keep your word about Osborne. I shall be there to enjoy the joke; and a glorious joke it will be to hear the fools calling for their witnesses—ha, ha! nice witnesses they’ll find. I never saw a dead man yet give evidence in a court of justice. Oh! it will be a glorious joke; but, remember, you may spoil all, unless you find Osborne.”

“I have still one hope of doing so,” said Horton. “If Dame Alyce know where he is hid, her saintly father Brassinjaw shall get it from her, and then the secret’s mine. But even if Edward should appear, he could do but little harm: the weaver is the one we have to fear, but he, you say, is safe. Farewell, until we meet on the morning after to-morrow, in the court. Tell Miles, I’ve ordered a famous feast for him here, after his acquittal—farewell.”

Although Horton assumed a bold air as they separated, he no sooner found himself alone in his own chamber, than he gave way to all his fears. “Man,” he said, “is a fool, when he thinks he can direct his own fate. I fear I have fallen into the trap I myself had laid. I am certain Master Hewet had the letter I placed under the outward door, otherwise, why have sent Osborne hence; but if he took the warning, as from a friend, why not have carried out that unknown friend’s advice in full? The Bully must have sought him in the wrong direction—my search shall prove more certain.”

Old Walter Cromwell, the brewer, of Putney, under whose care the merchant had placed Edward, had acquainted the youth with the true cause of his exile from the Bridge: this had greatly relieved young Osborne’s mind; and now, having nought to do but to amuse himself, he gave way entirely to his newly-born passion for the water. Billy-the-bridge-shooter had so thoroughly instilled into his pupil’s mind the true principles of the swimmer’s art, that nothing but practice was now required to enable him to reach perfection—and certainly practise he did. Morning, noon, and night, saw him emulating his sire, as he had called old Father Thames, ever since the night of his water-wonder dream.

Old Walter Cromwell had taken a great fancy to young Osborne, and often did they stroll together into the country around. On the morning of the day he was to start for London, the old man and he were out together, when the former stopped before a very humble cottage, lying west of the highway, leading from Putney to the upper gate. It was called the “Smith’s shop;” above the door was the sign of the anchor, and within was heard the clinking of an anvil. The old man

heaved a sigh, as he said—"Many is the happy hour I've passed in that old cottage; but then I was young, and to the young, every thing seems happiness; and my boy Tom was happy, too, before he ran away into foreign parts, and became a soldier, and the Lord knows what. I doubt me whether he is happier now he is called the great Lord Cromwell, than when he was but poor honest Tom, the smith. He wants me to go up to London, and says he'll make me a Lord; the Lord forbid! No, no, an old blacksmith, or an old brewer, is but ill-suited to a gilded court; so here I intend to live, and here I hope to die."

When Edward started for his master's home, the old man gave him a kind adieu, and then his blessing. When he reached the ferry at Battersea, he could not resist the temptation of a bath at the very spot where he had taken his first lesson in the art he now so much loved. He had scarcely prepared himself for the plunge, when violent screams and cries were heard from the opposite shore. He there saw a party of youths who had been bathing, but one of them had apparently floated out of his depth, and was evidently struggling for his life. Edward dashed into the water, and, swimming manfully, with the hope of rescuing the unfortunate youth, reached the spot just as the poor boy sank. In an instant more, and Edward was also gone. Now the screaming and cries for help along the shore were redoubled; but in a minute more, and all was changed to frantic shouts of delight, for they saw Osborne again come to the surface, bringing with him the senseless form of the youth.

"Take him," he said, now almost exhausted, as he landed upon the shore, "take him quickly to the hostelry, in the lane by the church, there you will get proper aid; fear nothing, he is not dead—his heart still beats."

The lads on the shore, who were evidently of the better order, were so bewildered, so confused, that they never thought of thanking Osborne for the noble action he had performed, but hurried away with their death-like burden, while he, jumping into the ferry-boat which had come to lend assistance, returned to the opposite side, where he had left his own boat and his clothes. Having dressed himself, and feeling fatigued, he threw himself upon the grass, and in a few minutes, his senses were wrapped in a profound slumber.

When he again awoke, he was astonished to find that the moon had already risen high in the heavens; so, getting quickly into the skiff, he launched her into the middle of the stream, and was once more on his solitary way. His mind was full of his recent exploit; but he now regretted much that he had not asked the name of the youth he had saved. How little could he then have guessed, that in after life, not only would he know that name, but that the bare sound of it would be as a dagger thrust through the ear into his very heart—but we must not anticipate.

"Come," said he, "I have not learnt to swim for nothing; he who saves a fellow-creature, has done that, which, though no more than his duty, may still make him feel an honest pride for the rest of his life. And I do feel proud—and I now bless the hour I met with that poor ragged lad; but he shall not go unrewarded—no, no, Edward Osborne is not one to make a friend, and break with him in the same instant:

if he be the lad I take him for, we are bound together for life. I shall first teach him to read and write—yes, this shall be the first service I will render him; and may Heaven grant that my boon to him may be as productive of good as his has been to me. Onward he rowed, and onward rolled the busy clouds above his head—one moment all was brightness—the next was deepest gloom. He was now fast approaching the Lambeth Marshes, whereon no house then stood—all here looked desolate. As he drew near the solitary tree which grew upon the point of land, at the bend of the river, he fancied he saw the forms of men as if struggling together, and dragging something towards the water's edge. The moon at this moment shone out so brightly that he could clearly discern four men—three of them forcing the fourth along, whose head and shoulders were entirely covered with some thick cloth, as if to prevent his cries from being heard; they dragged him into a boat and hastened to the centre of the river. Here the struggle appeared to be renewed, and the poor wretch, having for a moment freed his head, screamed out “murder,” and frantically cried aloud for help. Osborne forgetting at once the danger he might run, strained every nerve, and made his skiff fly through the water towards the murderers; just when he reached them he saw the tallest ruffian raise a large hammer, and dash it with all his might upon the head of their victim. Osborne's heart turned sick at the sound of that deadly blow. The body they cast overboard, but as it fell, it nearly carried with it the murderer, for the poor wretch had seized, in the death struggle, so firmly upon the assassin, that had not his coat given way, they had both sunk together into eternity. They now furiously attacked young Osborne—and in a moment his boat was turned keel upwards, and he was gone!

As the tide was running down rapidly, the murderers watched anxiously in the direction of the flood, and Blared-eyed Bully, for it was he who had just murdered the poor weaver, said, “Take this hammer, Bill, and if he comes to the surface again, use it as I did. Good fortune, like misfortune never comes single. Who could have expected such luck as to have met with our other man, the stripling Osborne, in such a place, and at such a time too! He and the weaver may go together and give their evidence to the fishes—they'll tell no tales of us to-morrow, I'll swear. What's that?” and he pointed to something in the water; thinking that it might be Osborne they dashed the hammer at it, but soon found it to be merely an old basket floating by. They looked around in every direction; not a ripple was on the bright face of the water; so feeling now secure, the three wretches rowed on towards Old London Bridge.

CHAPTER IV.

For as the lamb toward his death is brought,
 So stands this innocent before the King :
 This false knight, that hath this treason wrought,
 Beareth her in hand, that she hath done this thing ;
 But nathèless there was great murmuring
 Among the people, and say they cannot guess
 That she had done so great a wickedness.—CHAUCER.

THE day on which Edward Osborne had been rowed by Billy-the-bridge-shooter up to Putney, proved a day of little less excitement to the good folk of the Bridge, than the day before (May-day) had been. All London soon became fully aware of the strange scene which had taken place during the tournament at Greenwich, and every house upon the eastern side of the old bridge, had its windows, and in many places its roof also, crowded with persons anxiously awaiting the return of those fatal barges, which seldom left the Tower but to revisit it, bearing some doomed victim of Henry's vengeance. It is true, the people of the city had for a long time past become so used to the shedding of blood, that, upon most occasions, an execution caused but little interest to any one, and passed by almost unnoticed ; excepting, indeed, when a dash of novelty as regarded the style of performance was thrown in, to give a zest to the tragic scene—as in the case of the execution of the Bishop of Rochester's cook, which brought a great concourse into Smithfield—for it was not every day the horror-loving populace could feast their eyes with such a sight, as that of seeing a human being cast into a raging cauldron, and boiled to death.

The powerful interest now evinced by the worthy citizens, arose principally from the exalted station of the victim, whom every one plainly saw was already doomed to be immolated on the altar of Henry's lust.

"It's not every day," as Catchemayde observed, "that we can see a Queen burnt alive, and I am told, if she's found guilty, she will be."

"I wish I was a King," said Checklocke, who was looking out of the same window of the Cardinal's Hat, "I wish I was a King ; it must be so prime to get rid of one's wife, whenever one sees a gal one likes better. If I only had a set of honourable, upright, Lords and Commons, and Judges and Juries, as Fatty has, who would burn their own fathers if he only held up his finger, would'nt I have a bran new wife ? ay—that I would, by the holy tongs of Saint Dunstan ! and that wife should be Flora Gray, dame Hewet's pretty maiden, who's now looking over the balcony yonder ;" and then kissing his hand to her, called out, "a right good morrow, pretty one."

"Don't be a fool," said Catchemayde ; "you'll have young Horton upon your back, for she says he's going to marry her."

"She says !—but what does *he* say ? there are generally *two* words to a wedding, and though she may say yea, he may say nay ; for a man may say what he likes before marriage, though his wife wont let him

afterwards. No, no; if I'm aught of a conjuror, master Horton looks for something a little *above* her."

Whether or not Checklocke meant his last words to carry a double meaning we cannot say, but certainly they might be so construed, for at that instant, Harry Horton, who was with Flora Gray in the lower balcony of the merchant's house, was casting an anxious glance to the one above, over the front of which was leaning, the lovely Alyce, her husband, and a young man magnificently attired. This young spark was an "exquisite," of the sixteenth century. Had it not been for the carefully-trained small moustache, discoverable upon the upper lip, his sex might have been doubted, for his dress consisted of a long kirtle, or petticoat, of the richest white damask silk, fastened in at the waist by a costly zone of jewels—the body was open in front, but laced across with cords of gold forming a stomacher, after the female fashion, through which was seen a chemisette of the finest foreign linen, embroidered richly with threads of Venice gold. Upon his head he wore a cap, or bonnet of white velvet bordered, and surmounted with splendid feathers; this covering for the head was jauntily placed very much on one side, purposely to show the caul, or netting of gold work, which enclosed his hair. Rings of precious stones adorned his fingers; and in his left hand he bore a silver scenter, or bottle highly chased, containing the most valued perfumes from Arabia. In his case, as in that of some we could point out of our own day, the "*dandy*" was permitted by nature to be the twin of genius. He was a poet! Now if a man but *attempt* poetry, he must of necessity be one who, at least thinks a *little*, and therefore elevates his own mind, although it may be but a trifle, above that of the common herd of nobodies.

Our dandy poet was called Sir Filbut Fussy. He was a young gentleman who always wanted to be doing something else—was very youthful, very handsome, very good natured, and very rich. Now a youth possessing all these advantages, and a turn for poetry and for music, was calculated to become a great favourite with the generality of the fair sex, and a great favourite Sir Filbut Fussy was. There was a gentleness in his manner, and a seeming sincerity in his attentions, that proved very dangerous to the female heart; not but some would have admired him more, had he put on a more manly bearing; but then they would have trusted him the less, and his great aim was to disarm them of all fear, and thus to make them weak by their own fancied security.

Sir Filbut Fussy, who had travelled much, was now entertaining the merchant's lovely wife with a description of an Italian meal, and raised her wonder, and a slight feeling of disgust, at the affectation of these Italians, whom she now learnt, for the first time, actually ate their dinners with a *fork*, instead of their fingers.

"Yes," said Sir Filbut, "I can assure you such is the fact; and I do hope to see the day, affected as I own it must at first appear, yes, I hope to see the day when Italian forks, instead of alabaster fingers, will be employed by all my fair countrywomen, to raise the luscious morsel from their platters, to their heavenly lips."

"You really make me laugh, Sir Filbut," said Alyce; "only picture

to yourself, husband, a whole party of us seated round the board using such childish toys, it is really too ridiculous. And did *you* ever use one, Sir Filbut?"

"I always do," was his reply; "I own I get greatly laughed at wherever I attend a banquet, when I draw forth this little case," saying which, he produced a small velvet casket, whence he took a very diminutive fork, made of Milan steel. "I believe," he said "I am the first who ever used a fork in England."

"And I hope you will be the last," said Hewet; "we have already too many foreign fancies brought here: since it has become the fashion of finishing a youth's education by sending him abroad, all our good plain old English ways are becoming subjects of ridicule and contempt with the rising generation."

"I wonder," observed fair Alyce, "our Queen, who, when plain Anne Boleyn was so much in foreign lands, has never yet rendered this affectation of the fork fashionable."

"That is easily accounted for," replied Sir Filbut; "the using of a fork would too much expose the sixth finger on her left hand; and we know her deformities are subjects she likes to keep concealed, witness the collar-band she wears about her neck, to hide the strawberry growing there."

"If all the reports be true," observed the merchant, "it will grow there but little longer; yet I cannot bring my mind to credit half the vile tales now circulating through the town, such wholesale depravity they accuse her with! Why, even her own brother is already a prisoner in the Tower; and Alyce's poor music-master, Smeaton, too, he little thought, poor fellow, on the day he came to tell us of his great good fortune, as he then thought it, in being called at court the favourite minstrel of the Queen, how dangerous a post his talents had raised him to."

"But, still," said Alyce, "so good and great a King as Henry is, would never act like this without some fair cause for doing so."

"You are right, sweet Alyce," said Sir Filbut, forgetting for a moment that her husband stood so near; he fortunately did not hear the tender expression, nor did he see the blush that suffused her angelic face—Sir Filbut marked it, but pretending not to do so, continued, "quite right, it is a fair, a right fair cause, and that *fair* cause is fair Jane Seymour!"

"Why, Jane Seymour is one of the Queen's own maids of honour," observed Hewet.

"And was not Anne Boleyn one of Queen Catherine's own maids of honour?" replied Sir Filbut; "if she supplanted good Queen Catherine, she pointed out the way for others to supplant herself; she lacketh wisdom, or she never would have had so fair a maid as Jane within the reach of one so quickly touched by beauty as is her own dear lord. He always had a *penchant* for maids of honour, although I fear me, not always honourable maids."

Great crowds of boats now appeared in the distance, and then began loud shouts, and yells, and hootings, which continued until the barge containing Anne Boleyn, her uncle the Duke of Norfolk, her deadly foe

the Duke of Suffolk, Cromwell, and others of the Council, reached the water-gate of the Tower.

The moment the boats had appeared in sight, Sir Filbut Fussy, who, as we have before said, always wanted to be doing something else, now took his leave, saying he would just go round to the Tower, see the Queen land, and having collected all the news he could, he would return at their evening meal to relate what he should have learnt, and give Alyce a lesson in the use of the Italian fork, and, if he might be allowed so great a happiness (here he slightly sighed), present her with one he had at his lodging, made of Venetian gold.

As Sir Filbut descended the dark stairs, he met Harry Horton, who, whispering, said—"How speeds your cause, good sir?"

"But indifferently well," the other answered: "that dolt, her husband, never left us for a moment. I ventured once to say sweet Alyce; she blushed, but took it kindly—at least, she frowned not."

"Few fair ones *frown* upon Sir Filbut, I would swear," said Harry.

"Not many, truly," said the Knight. "Oh, no, where'er Sir Filbut Fussy goes, he's ever smiled at."

"And laughed at, too," thought Horton, within himself. "But, good Sir Filbut, have you thought further about the diamond you spoke of? There's nothing wins a woman half so soon as diamonds."

"I faith, I have, and here it is; take it, good Horton, but, prithee, be careful of it, for it is a costly gem, and worth a dozen other women; but Alyce, pretty Alyce, is worth a dozen gems like that."

"And the purse for Flora?" said Horton; "she's an avaricious jade, and said her services must be but lightly valued, if weighed by such a purse as that you sent her last. I wish, to my very heart, we could have done without her; but, as she was determined to use her eyes, I thought it best to fasten a golden chain about her tongue; at all events, I've kept her quiet: even you, yourself, would never guess that she knew ought of what was passing."

"You are, indeed, a friend," observed Sir Filbut, taking Horton's hand; "but how do you propose to give sweet Alyce the diamond bauble, so as not to raise suspicion?"

"Leave that to me," was Horton's reply. "If once you see her wear it on her neck, you'll know it has been received right kindly. But, pray be cautious, Sir Filbut, and remember, it is gratitude alone that makes me act the part I do; but you have ever bound me to your service, by aiding to save me from the fangs of that vile Jew. Alas! alas! that I should have ever been so weak; perhaps, with years, I may become as wise as you, Sir Filbut, and escape the snares so often laid for youth. I know not how to ask it—but—no, you have done too much already for my service—and yet, if he should take me for that debt, who then could be your friend in this affair? I fear, for your sake, I must speak out—yes—yes, I must——"

"You alarm me!" said Sir Filbut. "Speak quickly, then, be whate'er it may."

"He swears he'll have *me*, or another hundred marks!"

"Is that all!" replied Sir Filbut, breathing more freely—"the money's yours."

"Too generous man!" replied Horton, with a voice almost stifled by overflowing gratitude, as he received this second purse; "but remember, it is but a loan. I keep a strict account, I can assure you, sir,—this makes the fifth hundred I have had."

"And you shall have five hundred more, if Alyce will but fly with me to Italy."

"Hush, hush! walls they say have ears. I have fortunately got rid of my prying brother apprentice, and all for your good service. Hark, I hear a footstep; farewell, and may good fortune smile upon so generous a friend."

Saying this, he re-entered the room he had come from, slamming the door suddenly, almost against the nose of poor Sir Filbut Fussy, who was about to make reply. Sir Filbut looked at the door for a moment with a gaze of intense meaning, as if about to ask it some question; but, we suppose, not expecting to get any answer, he turned away and proceeded towards the Tower.

"Any one would think, my dear," said the merchant to his fair dame, "you were half in love with Sir Filbut. I see but little in his poetry, that you extol so highly, and much less in himself to be admired."

"He must see enough in you to admire, William," Alyce replied; "for he is ever seeking your society."

"Any man who has a pretty wife, my dear, is seldom without some dozen butterfly attendants, fluttering about the sweet flower he has gathered to adorn his own breast with. Although I will not pay myself so ill a compliment, nor offer such an insult to my wife, as to be fearful of Sir Filbut, yet I had rather he stayed away a little more, or gazed at you a little less."

"Now you are jealous, my dearest husband, I am sure you are; and I am not sorry that you be; for it proves that Alyce is, in your dear eyes, still worth the guarding. Only be kind and true yourself, dear husband, and then you need fear nor sir, nor lord, nor duke! Believe me, that kindness and truth on a husband's part will seldom fail to prove the surest lock and key to secure a wife's affections."

How much longer this dove-like *côte-à-côte* would have continued, Cupid alone can tell, but it was now put a stop to by the renewed shoutings and hootings which ascended from those upon the river. The barges stopped at the Tower, and it was at this moment, as history informs us, that the doomed Anne Boleyn fell upon her knees in the barge, exclaiming, "Oh, Lord, help me, as I am guiltless of that whereof I am accused!"

"It's a sad sight," said Alyce to her husband, "and brings with it the sad reflection of how transient is man's love. It is but three years, this very month, that I stood here to behold the gorgeous pageant of bringing that same Queen in triumph, and from Greenwich, too, whence now she comes in such sad plight—three little years, and all is changed. The adored, the madly-beloved, Anne Boleyn, is now the despised Queen Anne. Yesterday was an evil May-day for her, poor soul! It is strange, but how many dreadful things have occurred in May. It was on the 19th of May——"

"That we were married," said Hewet.

"Now, that's unkind, William; do you consider that a dreadful thing?" inquired Dame Alyce.

"No, no, my love; I didn't mean that—and Heaven grant it may never prove so! Yet it is true that in that fatal month we joined our hands, and hearts too, I hope. It was in May that Rome was sacked and Bourbon killed; it was in May the dreadful sweating sickness seized on London; we were courting then; how anxiously I used to watch and pray for you, dear Alyce! Queen Catherine was tried in May; and it was in May, too, that good Sir Thomas More's misfortunes first commenced; and was it only last year in May, that John Houghton, the worthy prior of the Charter-House, with Webster, Lawrence, Reynolds, and John Hailes, were all drawn, hanged, and quartered?"

"But you forget," said Alyce, "the darkest day of all, that happened nineteen years ago—the dreadful 'Evil May-day.'"

"Forget it, never! for on that day I first saw you—it was an evil May-day!"

Poor Hewet seemed to be very unfortunate in his manner of placing certain recollections; but not being aware himself of his apparent want of gallantry, he continued—"Ah! Alyce, you were a child then, like our own sweet Anne, and little did I think that evil day would fix my after fate."

The Queen being now safely lodged in the Tower, the crowds began to disperse; the roofs and windows were soon deserted; the inhabitants of the bridge resumed their usual occupations; and all the stream of life seemed to be again flowing on, as if no strange event had just occurred, or that there were no forebodings of troubles soon to come, worth one serious thought.

Being anxious to explain several circumstances which happened soon after the dreadful murder of the weaver, and the loss of Edward Osborne, we shall touch but lightly upon the promised return of Sir Filbut Fussy at the good merchant's evening meal; yet we must not omit to mention that, be the cause what it might, whether it were done to charm her husband, or flatter Sir Filbut Fussy, or only arose from female anxiety ever to be admired, it is certain that Alyce Hewet, on the evening in question, had bestowed more than common pains upon her personal attire. Her whole costume had been changed for one of richer style, and one that set off her lovely figure to the greatest advantage. The floor of the room, too, was newly strewn with fresh rushes, and that rather uncommon commodity in those days, the Turkish carpet, was brought out, not to be trodden under foot, but to be employed by way of a table-cover. This circumstance leads us to believe that the first carpets introduced into England were the small prayer-carpets used by all good Mussulmen. We, ourselves, have seen a Persian prayer-carpet employed in this way; and a very elegant table covering it makes to the eye, but is rather too thick and stiff for comfort to the touch.

When Sir Filbut Fussy did arrive, he had nearly swooned with ecstatic delight, on perceiving his splendid diamond adorning the fair neck of Alyce. So overpowering was its effect upon his nervous temperament, that now, instead of wishing, as was his wont, to be doing

something else, he now wanted to be doing everything at once. He soon delivered himself of all the load of information he had gathered at the Tower, of how Anne Boleyn, for he said—"Already she ceases to be called the Queen," was not to go into a dungeon, as many thought she should have done, but was to be a prisoner in the same apartment she slept in the night before her coronation; but that her two greatest enemies, her own relation, Lady Boleyn, and Mistress Coſyns, were to hold her under the most insulting *espionage*: that, although her five accomplices were not yet tried, and by most considered innocent, it was still perfectly understood, that Smeaton, the musician, would first be racked, then hanged—the others beheaded. "The only doubt," he said, "lay in the fate of Anne Boleyn; but about her there was certainly a doubt!"

"Then the poor soul," said Alyce, with all a woman's pity for her sex in sorrow, "she may yet be saved?"

"Saved!" replied Sir Filbut, slightly smiling at so preposterous a thought. "Saved! oh, no! the only doubt is whether she be sent to the block, or to the flames; knowing, as I do, the King's tender nature, I should say the latter: much will depend on what Jane Seymour wish. It was to please Anne Boleyn he beheaded Moore, so now he may, perchance, behead herself to please her rival, for he is wondrously obliging to the fair; however, we soon shall see, for Henry, we know, is far too good to keep his subjects in suspense. 'A little longer, and Nan's a little shorter,' I heard a smith facetiously observe, as I came by, and, perhaps, the smith was right: 'but what matter is it to us—a burning, or decapitation, will each alike be cause of holiday,' so say the people. By Apollo's self, fair Alyce, what a lovely lute!"

Sir Filbut sprang forward to examine a beautiful instrument the chant's wife had just taken up, but in doing which, unfortunately, he trod upon the tail of her favourite little dog, who yelping, snapped so furiously at Sir Filbut's ankles, that taken off his guard, he kicked the animal nearly through the wall. Now, if there be aught on earth more likely than aught else, to put a sudden frustration to a lover's hopes, it is the accidental treading on a favourite poodle's tail—no matter what the love before, depend upon it, you are hated then—hated?—despised!

Sir Filbut Fussy felt all this, and hurried to redeem the ground he had lost, by flying to caress the "little dear;" but here again a new disaster befel Sir Filbut, of scarce less magnitude than the first, for not perceiving the lute which Alyce had let fall when springing to her darling pet, he literally "put his foot in it," and as the strings became entangled in his broad roseate, he danced about in vain endeavours to kick off this overgrown unnatural-looking wooden shoe.

Now, the ladies of the olden time being more accustomed to chins of beef and nut brown ale than are the fair one's of our own day, Alyce let slip the finest opportunity of shewing off her proficiency in the fainting art that may occur once in a hundred years—no, there was then, we believe, more nature, therefore less hysterics, than is thought fashionable at present, so Alyce merely let fall a tear or two for her Juno's sufferings, and then began to smile at Sir Filbut Fussy's perplexing situa-

tion. There were, however, one or two redeeming points about this unfortunate *contretemps* in favour of Sir Filbut, for it enabled him to shew his tenderness of disposition by gently wiping the little dog's tear-filled eyes, and kindly kissing the little dog's wounded tail, which he did until he completely won, not only the forgiveness of the little dog, but of its mistress too. The affair of the lute was much more speedily arranged, for Sir Filbut sent one of his serving men in waiting, at once, to his lodging to fetch his own costly theorbo, which was a lute of larger dimensions than the common instrument, and which he now played, as he said, "on bended knee," and had her husband not been present, there is little doubt, but he would have prayed of her in that position, "to accept it as token of her forgiveness." His prayer as well as his theorbo being received, they all sat down to the evening meal with great good will. Sir Filbut insisted, in spite of all remonstrance from Dame Alyce, or her spouse, that little Juno should lie upon his lap, and be fed with the choicest morsels.

A gentleman of Sir Filbut Fussy's rank being present, the table was laid out with holiday attention. Not a wooden platter was to be seen, as on common days, but all were polished pewter. The winter six months having ended at April, the salted viands, which always constituted the daily food, for half the year, of our good ancestors, now had given place to fresh meat, and to fowl, not that the feathered tribe were often seen but upon the tables of the upper classes. But our merchant, William Hewet, was a thriving man, and a rich, and could well afford vegetables when he would, as well as dainty birds, such as capons of Greece, although they cost a shilling and two groats a-piece, while common capons cost but sixpence each, and common cocks but threepence. But notwithstanding Hewet was so prosperous and wealthy, he complained bitterly, as people always do, of the high price that food had reached. "He could not," he declared, "buy a whole sheep of any 'flesher,' no, not even if he went as far as butcher-row, without the walls, for less than *two and tenpence* : and hogs," he said, "were just as dear ; *three and eightpence* was now the common charge ; and even sucking-pigs would cost you sixpence ; the common pullet was, perhaps, the cheapest thing at *twopence*, but if you wanted very good, they'd make you add another ha'penny : and as to eggs !" here the merchant really raised his eyes in horror—"yes, eggs ! for tenpence, you could only get a *hundred* !"

I wonder what our London market people would say, in these our days, to such *high* prices !

The little golden fork was not forgotten ; and Harry Horton, being the youngest there, having, as was his duty, carved the meat for his mistress in her platter, she almost choked herself with laughing at her own absurd attempt to use it as elegantly as did Sir Filbut.

What a moment of happiness and hope was this for Sir Filbut Fussy ! He had to guide her sweet hand to her sweeter lips ; in doing so, it could not be wondered at, if he found it necessary to squeeze her delicate fingers slightly, which, we must confess, Sir Filbut did ; but Alyce was too highly amused with what she herself was doing, to notice any little unnecessary pressure, which, no doubt, only arose from his anxiety, that

she should hold the Italian fork in a manner not to let it drop. Now, the most apt scholar there turned out to be little Juno, for whenever Sir Filbut had loaded his own fork with a delicious morsel, and turned his head but for a moment to attend to his fair pupil, Juno quietly took it off and ate it. This had occurred more than once to the unconscious Sir Filbut Fussy, whose mind was lost in wandering about in fancy's fairest garden. He saw but one object—he felt but one sensation: it seemed to him, as if Hope herself were holding to his eye a magnifying glass, through which but one bright star appeared—that star was Alyce Hewet. This delightful little scene of innocent flirtation might have lasted, we know not how long, had not Juno suddenly put a stop to it, by yelping horribly, as though he were in the act of strangulation. Imagine Alyce's horror, on looking at her favourite, whose eyes seemed starting from its head, to find Sir Filbut's fork nearly half way down its throat. The little animal had so much admired his new style of being fed, and observing a larger piece than usual, as he thought politely offered to him, made such a determined bite at it, that he had nearly swallowed fork and all. He was, however, soon relieved; but Dame Alyce declared, that from that moment, so dangerous an instrument should never again come within its reach. She took the dog into her own charge, then calling for her horn spoon, she, with that, aided by the use of the fingers of her left hand, finished her evening repast. She accepted of the golden fork, for she regarded it as a great curiosity; and she asked her husband, if he did not think it might be employed, very becomingly, as an ornament for the hair? After the surnap, or small upper tablecloth had been removed with the dishes, and a few of the scanty supply of fruits then to be obtained having been placed upon the table, accompanied by some flasks of those delicious sweet wines, Malmsey and Romney sacks, which then cost a shilling a gallon, the child—the lovely little Anne, was brought into the chamber.

Sir Filbut Fussy, who knew full well, that next to a lady liking herself to be admired, generally feels pleasure in hearing her offspring praised, now threw himself into perfect raptures with the "little angel." As there was no doubt about the exquisite beauty of Anne, Sir Filbut declared he never beheld two countenances so exactly alike as those of Dame Alyce and her child; he scanned and compared every feature, one by one; but when he came to the comparison of the eyes, Sir Filbut Fussy looked so languishingly into those of Alyce, and put on such a ridiculous expression of annihilating tenderness, that the good dame could no longer resist a smile, so feeling confused, she turned away, and proposed that they should have a little music.

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a profound bow to the lady, who, smiling, seated herself at the virginals, a sort of spinet, from which our modern pianoforte is derived.

Sir Filbut seized upon the theorbo he had just presented to Alyce; the merchant, without being asked to do so, at once began to tune his rebeck, or three-stringed fiddle; Harry Horton took up a flute; and Flora Gray, who was really a very pretty singer, was desired to be the leader of the vocals. Now, at all amateur concerts, the greatest difficulty to be overcome, is getting the various instruments in tune one with the other. There is generally a great diversity of opinion in the ears of *amateurs*, and so it proved upon the present occasion. Now, there is another remarkable circumstance, and that is, should there be a *husband* present, that husband is sure to be the one most blamed. This also was exemplified upon the present occasion, for do what Master Hewet would, whether he turned the pegs up, or whether he turned the pegs down, he was always wrong.

Flora Gray, who, perhaps, saw something more than pleased her, ventured to advise her master to be "a little sharper!" but this had a contrary effect to what she had intended, for it made her *mistress* "a little sharper," who pettishly desired Flora to be still, observing, that "not only now, but whenever any gentleman played with her, and her husband accompanied them, she always found him a great deal *too* sharp."

It now became the turn of Harry Horton and Sir Filbut Fussy to tune their instruments together, but here there was more jarring than ever; Harry declared that "he was in perfect accord with his mistress," at which Flora nodded her head, as much as to say, she thought so too; "and," said Harry, "that being the case, Sir Filbut, you must follow my advice, and be sharper—sharper—sharper—sharper." Poor Sir Filbut screwed, and screwed, but do what he would, he could not get to be so sharp as Harry Horton. By degrees, Sir Filbut finding himself closer and closer to the lovely Alyce, and Flora Gray having received a kind look from Horton, and placed her arm unseen by any one, through his, and the merchant having turned his back upon the whole party, in order to look more easily at his music, they all suddenly discovered that they were perfectly in tune, and so the concert began.

Grand was the crash, as the reader may suppose, when so many fine performers struck up together. Away they played for dear life. What did it matter to them whether they came in at the right place or not? Sir Filbut and Flora Gray felt that *they* were in the right place, so that was a good way towards things going on smoothly. The poor husband, as usual, came in for a sharpish reprimand, for when all else had left off, he kept on playing by himself for at least a dozen bars. This he accounted for by having turned over two leaves instead of one, so that he had all through been fiddling the accompaniment of a perfectly different piece of music, and in a different key too.

As a punishment, his wife desired him to sing a song, forgetting at the moment that the punishment would be theirs, not his—for Master Hewet never sang but one song in his life, and that was "Simon Frisell," a very ancient ballad, even three hundred years ago. As our gentle readers might like to know what really pure English was in those days,

we will insert *one* verse of Master Hewet's ten verse infiction; thus it ran :—

He rideth thourth the site as J tell may,
With gomen and with solas that wos here play.
To londonebrugge hee nome the way;
Moni was wyues the chil' that ther on loketh a day, .
And seide, alas!
That he was ibore—and so villiche forlore
So feir mon as he wos!
Now stout the heued above the tubrugge,
Fast bi Waleis soth for to sugge.

The sound is certainly pleasing to modern ears, but means neither more nor less, than that—he rides through the city, amidst the rejoicings of his enemies, and that his head stands on the town bridge, close by that of William Wallace. The heads of Sir William Wallace and of Sir Simon Frisell—or Fraser, are supposed to have been the first ever placed above the Traitor's Gate, on Old London Bridge.

After this the pretty Flora sang a ballad, every verse ending with something about “Naughty Harry of the Hill.” The words told a story that had often been told before, and has often been told since, that how a poor young girl loved a rich young man, much better than a rich young man loved a poor young girl; and that how she ultimately had to repent having listened to “Naughty Harry of the Hill.”

Then Sir Filbut sang a song of his own authorship, and his own composition, but this was of a rather better order, for, with all his vanity and folly, Sir Filbut Fussy possessed many of the attributes of a real poet, and of the genius of a musician; we shall by-and-by, have a more fitting opportunity of criticising his poetical and musical capabilities, and shall, therefore, now pass him by with this general remark, that every word he sang was of love, and every line he sang with pointed emphasis towards the beautiful Alyce.

The entertainments of this charming evening, were wound up by a sort of round or chorus, each singing a verse, and the symphony was taken up by all the instruments, somewhat after the fashion of the modern Ethiopian Serenaders.

The words have been old for some hundreds of years, and in those days were universally admired, therefore there was no difficulty in each person present taking a verse. Like all really Old English Ballads, it was of an almost interminable length; but we shall only insert a few verses. It was a most appropriate ditty (the locality considered), for the words were as follow :—

The first verse was chanted by little Anne, and began—

London Bridge is broken down,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
London Bridge is broken down,
With a gay La-dee.

“Then she must have been uncommonly heavy,” observed Master Hewet, who was beginning to get a little tired of the concert, and was

about to state so, when Horton joined in, laying a strong emphasis upon the word "*we*," as he looked at Sir Filbut:—

Then *we* must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
Then *we* must set a man to watch,
With a gay La-dee.

Suppose the man should fall asleep? (Sang Alyce.
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
Suppose the man should fall asleep,
With a gay La-dee?

Here Hewet gave a very loud snore, which proved that although not "*with a gay La-dee*," the man *had* fallen fast asleep. At this Flora sang, at the very top of her voice—

Suppose the *dog* should *run away*?
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
Suppose the *dog* should *run away*,
With a gay La-dee?

"What's that—what's that!" exclaimed Hewet, waking up with a start; and then, like a man who is suddenly called from his sleep to fulfil some important duty, he hurriedly bawled out—

Then we must chain him to a post,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
Then we must chain him to a post,
With a gay La-dee.

"And, damn 'em—thrash 'em both within an inch of their lives!" We beg to apologise for swearing, but it was a very common habit in the sixteenth century. Even Queen Elizabeth was not exempt from that vice of the day, so we hope, as faithful chroniclers, to be pardoned.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Alyce, "what ails you?" She was really alarmed, for Master Hewet still stood in the centre of the room quite bewildered.

"A thousand pardons, my dear Alyce," at last he said; "but I must have been dreaming; I've had such horrid visions flying through my brain, and mixing themselves up with that silly song. I'm afraid I've made myself more silly than the song itself."

The party now broke up, and each went their way.

Sir Filbut, as may be supposed, was in ecstasy at the progress he was sure he had made in the good graces of that queen of every grace, fair Alyce Hewet.

"Could any man on earth," he said, as he strolled homewards, "having so few opportunities of making himself agreeable to the fair, as he hitherto had had with Alyce, have done so much, in so little time, as he? No!" he exclaimed, proudly, as if there could be any cause for pride, in succeeding in any act of villany. "She has kept my diamond—how beautiful it looked on her fair neck! she has kept my lute—how lovely it will sound beneath her fair hand! And she has kept my golden fork——" Here he stopped, for he could not bring his mind to feel

how lovely it would look as an ornament to her fair hair; not but at that moment he thought her so right in everything, that had she told him to stick it through his own nose, and wear it there for her sake, we verily believe he would have done so.

As he passed beneath the Traitor's Gate, he started; for a voice, as if issuing from the very stones of the wall, sang pointedly, but oh! so sweetly—

Then *we* must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
Then *we* must set a man to watch
With a gay *La-dee*.

"Ha, ha! oh, oh! he, he——!" screeched out the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower, for it was he who had thrust his misshapen head out through a little window in the wall, close to Sir Filbut's ear, and had thus startled him.

"Why, Willy," said Sir Filbut, "you are like a ghost; at every turn you haunt one. Why are you not up amongst your darling traitors?"

"Because," replied the other, "I have a spike to spare, and came down to look for one darling traitor more."

"And have you found one?" asked Sir Filbut, laughing.

"Perhaps you can tell me," was the Cripple's reply.

"If you mean me, certainly not. I'm too loyal ever to war against my King."

"Oh! there are other traitors," replied the Cripple, "than those who compass a king's death; for instance, he who secretly wars against a man's good name—he is a traitor! and he who wars against a maid's good fame—he is a traitor! and——"

"Enough, good Cripple, say no more; you're far too quick for me to argue with. But I marvel not at your wisdom, seeing how many wise heads you always have at your command."

"Mind I do not place a fool's amongst them, by way of variety," said the Cripple, as he slammed to the casement.

Sir Filbut could not help laughing at the Cripple's retort, and having called out to him a loud "good night," continued his way towards his home. The Cripple was heard repeating the verse he had just sung, but now he altered the last line; for he said—

We must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
We must set a man to watch
For this poor La-dee.

CHAPTER V

I will myselfen with you ride
Right at mine owen cost, and be your guide.—CHAUCER.

THE reader will doubtless remember that at the close of the third chapter we described the manner in which the Blear-eyed Bully, with his two assistant murderers, had disposed of the unfortunate weaver and Edward Osborne. This happened in the night preceding the day on which the robber Miles was to be tried for his life. During the whole of that evening Master Hewet had felt so much anxiety concerning the non-appearance of Edward, that he could no longer resist telling his wife and Harry Horton the course he had pursued to ensure the safety of his apprentice. "Alas!" he said, "I fear I have fallen into a deep-laid snare, and have perchance become the innocent cause of some dreadful misfortune to the youth. Why was I in such haste to follow the advice of any anonymous informer? I believe that both the letters——"

"Both the letters!" exclaimed Horton, taken off his guard.

"Yes, two letters reached me; but I have every reason to believe that the second was forwarded merely to raise my confidence in the advice offered in the first; for in that I was told another would be placed within my reach, and so there was, and exactly in the manner described."

Horton was now taken completely aback. Could the Blear-eyed Bully have betrayed him? But why should he? He was the only one to whom Horton had divulged his scheme; but, then, the Bully's safety was as much at stake as his own.

Dame Alyce, to whom all this seemed like a romance, became greatly interested; for she, equally with the merchant, felt convinced that there was a plot laid, either for good or ill, so asked her husband a thousand questions, every one of which Horton himself would have liked to have put, but felt he dared not. How anxiously did he list to every word the merchant uttered in answer to Alyce's inquiries, hoping therefrom to find some clue to the mystery.

It appeared, that not an hour after the dead of night, the merchant was disturbed by a strange noise at the window of the room next to his dormitory, looking on to the bridge; indeed, it was the same casement at which they had stood the day before to witness the procession of the Maypole. As this noise, a sort of tapping, continued, the merchant at last arose to learn the cause; and on looking out, he saw a boy beneath, who, the moment the casement opened, raised on the end of a long willow wand a letter, which the merchant having taken, the boy ran swiftly away towards the City. So truthfully was this letter written, that Master Hewet acted upon its advice immediately, and sent off Edward in the manner the reader is already aware of. The merchant, on descending in the morning, found Horton's letter forced under the outer door; he had placed it there only a few minutes after Osborne had de-

parted. The merchant said, that although the finding the second letter confirmed, in some degree, the truth of the first, yet it had perplexed him much, for it proposed a place of safety directly opposite to that in which he had placed Edward. "But," he continued, "whatever misfortune, if any has happened, must have occurred this day; for he was safe with my old friend at Putney as late as yesterday; this I know."

"And is safe, yet, you may depend," said Alyce. "He knows full well the hour he will be wanted, and, no doubt, will be at Westminster to-morrow, by the time you reach the court. You know how pressing Walter Cromwell is to all who visit him; and to that over-kindness you may, believe me, attribute this delay. But Osborne ever was a thoughtless boy, and, doubtless, was glad of any plea to spend another day of idleness; for, as the saintly father Brassinjaw has often said——"

"Yes, yes, my dear, I know, I know exactly what the saintly Father has often said," observed the merchant, "so let us retire to rest, for the thought of that man always makes me feel sleepy, without even hearing what he says."

"Oh, husband, I'm shocked! but, yet, I hope we both may live to see the day that you will think as highly of that saintly creature as I do."

"I hope, with all my soul, we may," replied the merchant, "for then we shall never die!"

This was far too shocking to be replied to, so Alyce took up the lamp, and shaking her head sadly, left the room, followed by her husband.

Horton went to his chamber, but it was useless to attempt sleep: he was bewildered quite. He said he must have been a fool not to have thought of Cromwell's; but how could he have guessed that any one could have proposed that place—and how could any one have learnt his plans. It was too late, now, to start for Putney, and he had, unfortunately, no appointment with the Bully until after the trial; but, still, so anxious and restless did he feel, that he determined to visit the "Cardinal's hat," thinking it might, by some chance, so happen that his murderous friend should be there upon other affairs.

We have already stated, that after the murder, the three wretches took their way towards the Bridge, so, that, by mere accident, it did turn out exactly as Horton had hoped; for, soon after he had entered, these blood-stained worthies also came in.

Horton was upon the point of telling the Bully all he had that night learnt; but was silenced, and made almost to sink with fear, as the Blear-eyed Bully whispered in his ear the horrors they had just committed.—"Here, milksop!" he said, pushing a jug of hot liquor towards Horton, who had turned deadly pale, "take some of this spirit, for you have but little of your own, and then go home to bed—that's the best place for boys: sleep off your fears, and, in the morning, when we meet in the court, look well at me, and learn the proper bearing of a man."

We will not attempt to follow the workings of Horton's mind during the dark hours of that night. At every turn he fancied he saw the weaver and Osborne bleeding at his bedside; and waking, found himself continually crying out, that, it was not he who had murdered them.

The moment it was light, he arose, and bathing his head and face again and again in cold water, he tried to shake off his fears, and to a degree succeeded. He felt, that although the crime had been committed, no one could accuse him; and now, both the witnesses against Miles being gone, the robber would doubtless put on a more courageous bearing, and keep his tongue between his teeth. What seemed to relieve Horton's mind most effectually, was a virtuous determination he had formed, in the darkness of the night, that, should he but escape the present danger, henceforth he would enter upon a better course. Poor youth! he had yet to learn, how seldom are the good intentions formed in darkness, ever allowed to live through the light of even a single day.

When the time for departure of the merchant, and those who were to attend the court, had arrived, Sir Filbut Fussy, who had now become a frequent visitor at the house of merchant Hewet, made his appearance. He was mounted on a beautiful horse, and followed by a number of others, led by his men, bearing upon their left arms his badge of servitude. Alyce, having expressed a wish to hear the trial, it had been settled, at the earnest solicitation of Sir Filbut, that the whole party should go by land, instead of by water, as was the usual method, and that he should be allowed the honour of supplying the horses from his own stables. Another reason Sir Filbut offered for proposing this arrangement, was, his desire to have the advice of the merchant, regarding an open plot of ground lying in the Strand, which he had a wish to purchase for the purpose of erecting a mansion upon it.—“This they could,” he said, “examine on their way to Westminster; and he should, by the present arrangement, have the advantage of consulting the exquisite taste of the merchant's wife.”

A splendid charger had been provided for Master Hewet, with a pillion behind for the accommodation of his fair spouse. A mule was placed at the disposal of Horton, and another, upon which was a kind of double leathern chair, very like those used in the present day for children, when they ride in pairs upon donkeys in the park—this was for the use of Flora Gray and the little Anne, for Dame Hewet seldom took pleasure away from home, where she could not be accompanied by her handmaiden and her darling child. After all were mounted, there still remained one mule without a rider; this had been provided for Osborne, for up to the last moment, they still expected his arrival. When all was ready, two running footmen took the lead, two more, one on each side the head of the horse, which bore the merchant and his wife, attended by Sir Filbut Fussy, then came Flora with the little Anne, and at her side, the worthless, but by her admired, Harry Horton. The rear was brought up by several mounted serving-men, all in the livery of Sir Filbut Fussy.

The narrowness of the bridge, rendered it incumbent on those who met the cavalcade, occasionally to vanish into the shop door-ways, or to stand aside, in the open spaces looking upon the waters. Here and there, the houses approached so close together, that only one rider could pass comfortably along without endangering the pedestrians, whom they should chance to meet.

Just before quitting the Bridge, when in one of the narrowest parts

the merchant's horse, from some cause or other, shied, and had nearly done great harm to a passer-by, who, striking the horse across the head with his staff, exclaimed—"Curses on ye, upstarts! What, oh! brother Hewet, is it thou? Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he——! But I shall boil your head yet! I shall boil your head yet!"

"Out of the way, Cripple!" said Horton, savagely striking at him with a heavy whip, which the Cripple parried with his staff, and merely uttering a contemptuous "Pish!" hobbled on towards the Bridge-gate Tower, humming, as he went—

"We must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea—
We must set a man to watch
For this poor La-doe."

When the party quitted the Bridge, they turned to the left, and passed along Thames Street, then one of the best Streets, but still very straggling in its form. By-and-by they turned up Paul's Chain, into Paul's Church Yard, and thence quitting the City by the Ludgate, descended Ludgate Hill, then called Fleete Hyll; passed over Fleete Bridge, for, at the time we speak of, the River Thames received a smaller river, where Blackfriars Bridge now stands, which river was called the River of Fleete; it was broad and deep, and was of great use for merchant-vessels. This river afterwards became partially filled up, and then bore the less ostentatious appellation of Fleet Ditch. Many years elapsed, and it was covered in, and now what remains of it is hid beneath Bridge Street, and that magnificent opening, Farringdon Street, at the extremity of which, formerly stood another bridge, crossing the same River of Fleete, called Oldbourn, or Holborn Bridge.

An observation, which fell from the lips of merchant Hewet, as they crossed Fleete Bridge, clearly shews that, at that early period of his career, he must, as we have before stated, have been a merchant well to do, for he said, answering a question of his wife—"No, love, not on the left, but yonder, to the right; the whole of that range of vessels, which, even you, a female, may perceive, are better appointed than the rest, those are the vessels belonging to your adoring husband, William Hewet."

A little beyond Temple Bar, the noble horse upon which the merchant rode, and which had previously, more than once, shewn a restive disposition, became almost unmanageable, and Alyce was so alarmed, that she dared not, she said, remain upon so fiery a steed; but Sir Filbut Fussy declared, that this horse was the one he always rode, and was mildness itself when he was upon its back; as a proof of the soothness of his words, he begged the merchant to alight, and change horses. This the merchant did, and Sir Filbut, having placed himself before the lovely Alyce, and having begged of her to hold fast by him, and fear nothing, made the animal go through his various paces with all the docility of a lamb. Sir Filbut's spirits now rose to an amazing height, for he had, at last, brought about what he had expected long before; but he had miscalculated the good horsemanship of our city merchant. The truth was, that Sir Filbut's charger was so well schooled to the peculiar manage of his master, that, hitherto, few had ever been

able to keep their seats but himself; and it had annoyed him terribly, to find that Hewet knew so well the temper of a horse, as to be able, thus long, to keep him in control.

They had now reached the Strand, at that time a very ill-formed road, for it was but three years before that the real line of way could be said to have been fairly marked out; before that, it is true, the land traffic, the little which took place, passed this way from the City of London to that of Westminster, the principal conveyance, both of merchandize as well as of passengers, being that of boats. As a proof of the enormous importance the Thames then enjoyed, it is said, that no less than forty thousand watermen were at one time enrolled upon the lists of their fraternity.

The new road, for it might be called new at the time we speak of, having, as we have just said, but been completed three years before, namely, 1533, was scarcely used but to approach the northern entrances of the grounds belonging to the various noble mansions built some distance from the Strand, and overlooking the bright and busy Thames. From all the gardens belonging to these mansions, houses, and castles of the great, there was, from each, a "stair," or, as frequently called, a "bridge" by our modern writers, who seem to regard the terms as synonymous; but, upon this point, we must be allowed to differ. The "stairs" were, as their name implies, merely steps leading down to the water; but the "bridge," as the "Queen's Bridge," "Privy Bridge," and others, were well-built structures, erected for the purpose of commodious embarkation, and at the end of which were steps, also descending to the water, to be used when the tide was low; but the main portion was, literally a bridge, extending, in many cases, far into the river, and built upon several arches.

The whole of the north side of the Strand, at this time, was open country, and it was here that Sir Filbut pointed out a spot of ground, not far from where the Adelphi Theatre now stands, as the site of his new mansion. He said—"I shall build a tower high enough to overlook all the fields yonder; the Convent Garden (now Covent Garden Market), the little village of St. Giles, and, indeed, far beyond." The merchant pronounced it to be an admirably-formed conceit; and Alyce admired the locality as being "so superbly open."

It now seems almost beyond our belief, when casting an eye up any of the several courts, to imagine that that spot could have ever been pronounced as "superbly open;" yet so it then was; and even thirty years later, we find but a single row of dwellings along that line, and all beyond green open country.

The party soon after arrived at the court of justice. Sir Filbut Fussy, with Alyce and her maiden, obtained accommodation in the gallery above, while Hewet and Horton hurried about, in vain endeavour, to find Edward Osborne and the other witness, Wallace the weaver. Horton was not yet so inured to crime, as to be able to hear, with composure, even the names of those whose dreadful fates he knew full well. Horton had another reason for his present seeming activity in his master's cause, and that was, the hope of learning from the Bully, if possible, how Miles was likely to act, now there was every chance, nay,

certainly, of his acquittal. His mind was set completely at rest, when at last he encountered this worthy, for he assured Horton, that Miles was "staunch to the backbone, now there could be no danger; but he's a cowardly cur," he said; "and lucky it is for us that they are both dead, or we should have swung for it, as sure as we have necks to hang by. But, hark! they are calling on the cause." They entered the court by different ways, just as Miles was put to the bar.

The merchant had proposed to his man of law to throw up the case, and let Miles be discharged at once; but the man of law, having prepared a most eloquent speech, not feeling inclined that the world should lose so great a treasure, insisted upon going on at all events, until they had to call their witnesses—"For," as he said, "it is not impossible that both Osborne, as well as Wallace, may yet arrive." Every time he came to the words, "which we shall be able to prove by our witnesses," Horton saw a sneer of contempt and triumph pass across the features of the Bully. At last, the counsel having exhausted all his beauties of speech, as well as his breath, sat down; and the crier called upon Edward Osborne to come into court; but no Edward Osborne answered: this having been done three times, the opposing counsel was heard to say, in an undertone of voice, but quite loud enough to reach every ear—"Exactly what I expected, exactly what I expected." Then came great nodding of heads together, and smiles, and a whispered witticism or two at the expense of brother Whistlepipe, Master Hewet's leading counsel. Then the crier called three times upon the next witness, Wallace, the weaver, to appear, but with no better result than in the case of Osborne. Upon this second failure, up started Sergeant Thunderdown, brimful of that virtuous indignation which counsel can at all times call up from the very bottom of their too sensitive hearts. He said—"The insult to the Court was almost too great to be borne, and were it not for the respect he felt for the learned judge before him, he should be tempted to tell his learned brother, Whistlepipe—but, no, no; he would, for this time, swallow the gall of his indignation, and stifle in its birth the child of his resentment. Besides," he said, "there was another reason for his determination to say but little, and that was, his wish to ease the feelings of that poor innocent creature there," (here he pointed to the prisoner, who really appeared to be the very impersonation of villany), "look at his face—there you will see the very index of a book of innocence, that a babe might read with advantage." He appealed to the judge, he appealed to the jury, he appealed to all who heard him—had there ever been such a trumpery, such a contemptible, such an insulting case, as the one now brought before them? Here was a poor, worthy, hard-working, honest, religious creature, accused of robbery, kept in prison for weeks and months—he was going to say years, for every week in prison, to the innocent, is as a year—he is to be tried for his life, and when it comes to the proof, the witnesses dare not look innocence in the face, and therefore abscond—yes, abscond! Now, although his injured client must of necessity be acquitted, yet, to shew the world how worthy a man had been placed in that dreadful position, he would call one, only one, although he had a hundred witnesses ready to speak to character. He called Captain Bully.

Horton rose up actually with astonishment when he saw the Blear-eyed Bully most unconcernedly take his place in the witness-box. Had but one hundredth part of what *Captain* Bully said been true, Miles would have been one of the most celestial beings heaven had ever permitted to visit this earth—there was not a virtue of man, woman, or child, that Miles did not possess, at least, so said the noble *Captain*. The Bully became so warmed by his subject, so enthusiastic in his eulogiums, so eloquent in his praises, that Miles actually blushed at hearing himself thus painted in all the colours of the purest virtue, religion, equity, and honour! There is scarcely any knowing how long the Bully would have continued, had not he been stopped suddenly, just as he was calling upon Heaven to send, if such an one could be found, a single human being, who would dare to accuse his innocent friend. He had just finished this sentence, when a cry was raised by those without, or "He's here! he's here!" followed by loud shouts; in another moment, a party of Hewet's workmen hurried in, bringing with them Edward Osborne.

Had a ghost really appeared, the effect could have been but little greater upon the prisoner and the witness. Miles became deadly pale, his teeth chattered in his head, and he had nearly fallen to the ground; the Blear-eyed Bully stood aghast, but being a man of iron nerves, suddenly recovered his self-possession, and immediately attempted unseen to leave the court.

"Remain!" exclaimed the Judge, who had observed the intention of the Bully. The crowd that stood around the witness-box forced him back again, and then came forth all the wretch's reckless audacity. He in a loud voice addressed the Judge, saying—"My Lord, why am I detained? I have given my evidence. I am a witness, not a prisoner!"

"Oh, God! that voice!" exclaimed Edward, who, turning saw the Bully; "that form—it is—it is the murderer!"

As may be supposed, this sudden accusation caused an immense sensation in the Court. Edward was called upon to explain his meaning, and listened to with breathless attention, as he related all that he had witnessed the night before. As he proceeded in his narrative, at every step the interest became more and more intense; and a shudder ran through the whole court, as he described the death-struggle of the victim with his murderer; every eye was fixed on the Blear-eyed Bully, as Edward pointing to him, exclaimed, "and as God shall prove my words, that man is the murderer!"

There was little doubt now, that if what Osborne had stated were true, the murdered man was the unfortunate weaver. The Bully was placed in the dock with Miles, and called upon to answer, if he could, the accusation against him.

As he took his place by Miles, he looked down upon him with a withering sneer of utter contempt, for Miles was almost sinking from intense agitation. Harry Horton was scarcely less alarmed, and kept his eyes rivetted imploringly upon the Bully, who said in a deep under tone, "I am no blab!" Horton felt his meaning, and for a moment breathed more freely.

"See, see," said Osborne, again pointing to the accused, "I had for-

gotten to say, that as the body, to the feet of which a huge stone was tied, fell heavily from the boat, the murdered victim had seized so tightly upon his assassin, that in sinking down, he bore with him a portion of the murderer's coat, to which he had clung; and see, the jerkin of that man is rent, and part is torn away."

"Ha, ha, a pretty witness this to swear a man's life away!" exclaimed the Bully, "who first examines a poor devil's clothes, and because they are not so prim and new as his own, turns one's poverty to account, and——"

Here he was interrupted by Miles, who no longer able to bear his mental suffering, cried out—"Mercy, mercy! only save my life, and I will tell all——"

"Silence!" roared out the Blear-eyed Bully. At the same time Harry Horton rose, knowing not what he did.

"I will not be silent!" said the other; "only promise me my life—only promise me my life—and I will tell all: there are more here who know——"

"Silence, hell-dog!" exclaimed the Bully, foaming with rage.

"I will speak, I will speak——"

"Then damn you!" he cried, in a voice of thunder; and with a giant's power gave the poor wretch such a deadly blow upon the temple with his clenched fist, that the blood flew about in all directions, and Miles lay dead at his feet.

But this was not yet the climax of the horrid scene; shouts of execration were heard, the large doors opposite to where the prisoner stood suddenly flew open, and there was seen a crowd, headed by the Bridge-shooter, bearing in the dead body of the murdered weaver, in whose hand was still clenched the damning evidence against his assassin. The Blear-eyed Bully's whole face swelled up until scarcely a feature could be distinguished; his eyes seemed bursting from their sockets; the women screamed; Alyce fainted; and the whole court became a scene of fright, bewilderment, confusion and of horror.

CHAPTER VI.

Say forth thy tale, and tarry not the time.—CHAUCER.

ALYCE being too indisposed to ride home, Sir Filbut Fussly flew to the Palace Stairs, and hired one of the most commodious barges there in this she was placed, supported by cushions, and sat reclining between her husband and Sir Filbut: on one side of the boat was Flora Gray, on the other little Anne, with her favourite, Edward Osborne, and in the centre, but at a respectful distance, Billy-the-bridge-shooter was seated on the floor, for Edward had already acquainted the good merchant with quite enough of the late strange occurrences to raise his curiosity, and create a desire to know more. They had searched in vain for Harry Horton—he had left the court unseen, immediately after

the murderer had been committed. They felt no alarm on his account, for just as the merchant was placing his foot upon the barge, an ill-looking fellow handed him a letter; this was from Horton, excusing his absence, under the plea of having been sent for, to attend, what, he said he feared, would prove the death-bed of his beloved father. Not one word of this was truth; but he found himself in such a state of fear for his own safety, which now rested upon the breath of the Blear-eyed Bully, that it was impossible he could endure the restraint, under which he would be compelled to keep his dreadful anxiety, were he beneath his master's roof. The letter could scarcely be read, from the trembling of his hand, which Alyce attributed to "that good young man's over-wrought filial anxiety."

As may be supposed, they had scarcely been seated before the wonderful scene they had just left became the all-absorbing topic of conversation, and now Edward explained those parts in which he was concerned, and which he had omitted when in court, as being useless at that time.

"But to what miracle," said the merchant, "did you owe the preservation of your own life?"

"To that miracle!" replied Edward, pointing and looking kindly at Billy-the-bridge-shooter; "it is to him I owe my life, through God's help, and to him alone!" he seized the lad's hand and shook it heartily; "would that I knew how to thank him enough!"

"Kiss him," said the child; "that's the way you always thank me when I please you."

"But perhaps, Anne," said the merchant, smiling at the child's innocence, "but perhaps he would prefer being thanked by some fine lady—will Flora, perchance——"

"Indeed, master, but Flora won't," said the maid, tossing up her nose.

"Then I will," and throwing her arms round the lad's neck, the child kissed the Bridge-shooter, whose face became scarlet with confusion. A hearty laugh was sent forth at his expense, as he said, "Thank'y, my lady, but vot I a' done for him an't worth half of that—it an't indeed, my lady; he was kind to my poor old mother, you sees, my lady; and I teach'd him to swim—I only teach'd him to swim—that's all—and I hope my lord and my lady, and you, honord sir, I an't done no harm; if I has, I humbly craves your pardon." Having said this he looked all manner of ways, he felt so terribly ashamed. Edward to relieve him of his embarrassment, drew all the attention towards himself, by explaining how (having, by the able instruction of his humble friend, become a most able and expert swimmer, since he had left his master's home), he had been enabled to baffle the murderous intention of his assailants the night before. It appeared, fortunately for himself, his presence of mind never for a moment forsook him, notwithstanding the danger he was in, and the agitation caused by witnessing the dreadful murder. The moment he was precipitated into the water, he felt that were he again to be seen by those wretches, his death was certain, so calculating (which proved to be exactly the case), that as the stream was running swiftly down, they

would naturally first watch in that direction, in order to complete his destruction should he again appear, he, whilst under the water, laboured to swim for a time against the stream, and remembering that he had seen a single barge at some distance off, he turned his course, as well as he could guess, in that direction; fortune befriended him, for when compelled again to come to the surface to take breath, he perceived himself to be just on the further side of it; this for a time screened him from their view, but fancying they were turning their boat to that point, he once again dived under, and coming up as seldom as his now-failing strength would permit, he at last gained the shore.* So completely worn out was he, that he found it impossible to rise from the ground upon which he now lay. The night had become bitter cold—his senses were gradually leaving him—strange fancies flitted through his brain—he felt that he was dying—when, just as his eyes were closing, and he had given up all hopes of life, he felt a hand placed upon his shoulder. The sudden thought that the murderers had seized him, gave him for a moment the strength of despair; he turned, when over him he saw, by the moon's light, the kneeling figure of an aged woman. "Come," she said, "come, I am sent to fetch you. Ha, ha! my son will own I'm a witch now, I'm thinking: were I not a witch, how had I known you were here. Whoever you may be rise and follow me; but first take this—it is a magic draught that always gives me strength." She placed to his lips an antique wooden bottle, curiously carved; the spirit it contained acted powerfully upon his frame, it glowed like fire through his veins. The old woman again urging him to follow her, he made another effort to rise, which, by her aid, proved successful. In a few minutes they reached a hut of the humblest kind; it stood alone in the midst of the marshes near Lambeth, then a bleak and desolate spot; but his heart was cheered by the sight of a blazing fire, and his wonder raised to the highest pitch, for there by its welcome light he saw the Bridge-shooter comfortably seated.

"But I was more astonished nor him," said the lad, "to see Master Edward walk in with my old mother. But don't believe, good gentle folks, that she is a vitch—she isn't—indeed she isn't; although she does at times make vun doubt vun's seven senses."

Edward soon concluded his narrative, by stating that, completely overcome with fatigue, horror, and anxiety, it was useless to attempt reaching the merchant's that night, and it was late in the morning before a boat could be procured. The Bridge-shooter had not accompanied him, for he said he had a little secret business of his own to perform that morning, but hurried Edward away straight to the Court. Of all that subsequently happened there, the reader is fully aware. Alyce and Flora had been so interested in Edward as he told his tale of wonder, that they began to regard him with a very different feeling to that which they had experienced towards the poor youth on May-day, at Mary Overies' Green. Billy-the-bridge-shooter now became the centre of attraction to all the party, as he took up the thread of the discourse, saying—"Indeed, I vos astonished to see Master Edward come in vith my mother! And didn't she rate me soundly for my disbelief of her being a vitch? 'What,' said she, ven Master Edward vos asleep, and

we were a vatching on him—"what," said she, "should have told me all that has come to pass, if I am not a witch? Is it nothing, think you, that three several times to-night a coal should have flown out of the fire, and every time of a different shape?" "It would a been much more vunderful, mother," said I, "if their shapes had a been all alike." Then she vent on—"The first was like a coffin, and so fairly made, that I knew it was for speedy use; that spoke of coming death—and has not a man been murdered? The next was like but half a coffin; a death but half performed—and has not Master Edward, as you call him, been within an inch of death? The last that came, was like a large full purse!"—"Vell, mother," said I, "that's not comed at all events." "But it will, boy—it will," she replied: and I wish it may——"

"And so it shall," interrupted Master Hewet; "but, proceed."

"There, now, I think you thinks I thinks about the money," said the lad, "and that's vot made me tell you vot mother said; but I doesn't—indeed I doesn't! Vell, ven Master Edward vos fairly off, says I to mother, 'to prove a murder, you vonts a vittness; now, there can't be no vittness half so good of a man's being murdered, as to make a vittness out o' the man himself. Mother agreed with vot I said, for she's clever at times; so off I started to the vorter. Scaley Bill, the salmon fisher, was close in ashore. I told him all about it, and off we pushed to the spot Master Edward had pointed out: down I dives, and there, sure enough, I found the bedy—it was bolt upright, as if trying to rise to tell the world of the misdeed. I'm not afraid of dead men—not I, nor much of living vuns neither; so I undid the stone that vos fastened by a slipknot round his legs, and with my horrid load, swam to the light o' day. Scaley Bill vos monstrous frightened ven he saw me come up, and crossed himself, I don't know how many times, and said I don't know how many prayers, afore he'd let me get into the boat. Lots of other boats now came about; ve soon landed—and all the rest your honors knows."

"But," enquired Edward, who possessed, as all else did in those days, a degree of superstition, "but, if your mother were not a witch, how came she to find me at that hour of the night, and in such a place? and what did she mean by saying she was sent to fetch me?"

"I axed that myself," said the lad; "and she said—"Do you think it's nothing," for she generally begins her clevernesses by asking if it's nothing—and it very often is—"do you think it's nothing to see a spider creeping, and creeping, from under your petticoats——"

"Ah!" screamed Flora, at the same time catching up her own all round her legs, and shewing a very pretty little pair of ankles, as though one had been creeping, and creeping, from under her own; then blushing at her fears, she carefully covered her feet, and the lad went on.

"I watched it," said mother, "all agross the floor, and it went on, and on, until it came to some water I had spilt, and there it stopped; by that I knew it was at the water's brink, that what I was to find would no where else be found: so off I trudged, and didn't I find the youth; and now, silly boy, will you still say I'm not a witch! I know mother 'll be burnt, I know she will; I keeps her in the marshes out of the way, on purpose that no one may hear her nonsepe."

All the party agreed, however, that it was very strange, a very wonderful coincidence, a very extraordinary agreeing of facts, &c. &c. ; but everybody laughed at the idea of believing in witchcraft, yet, inwardly every soul there determined privately to pay a visit to the witch of the marshes. No other incident occurred until they arrived at the merchant's, excepting that Billy-the-bridge-shooter, at his most earnest entreaty, was allowed to shoot the boat through Old London Bridge, instead of landing the party at the Swan stairs, and this he did in so masterly a manner, that all allowed the honourable name he bore was most meritoriously bestowed. Sir Filbut placed a piece of gold in his hand, and desired to know the address of his mother in the marshes, as he might, perchance, pay her a visit of charity. As the lad described the spot, not only were Flora's ears strained wide open to catch every word, but also those of the lovely Alyce ; and it must be owned that Master Hewet, too, made up his mind not to forget the direction of the cunning woman of the marsh.

Such horrible murders as that of the weaver on the river, and of Miles in the open court, combined with the strange, nay, almost miraculous, discovery of the perpetrator, naturally became the topic of universal conversation. Every running newsman reaped a plentiful harvest, by retailing all the most minute particulars of how deep the wound was in the weaver's head—and how far the blood of Miles had flown, and how the greater part of it had spirted right over Harry Horton, Master Hewet's apprentice. "Indeed, but it did," said the newsman of the Cardinal's Hat ; "I ought to know, for I was there, I imagine." Now he, like all his fraternity, was sure to have been at every scene he described, although fifty might have been going on at once, in fifty different places.—"Indeed, but it did, and it took such an effect on Master Horton, that he's gone home ill to his father's."—"But who is the murderer?" said Checklocke the smith, for this dialogue took place in the upper, or more respectable room of the wine house, and was now filled by the traders and smaller merchants of the Bridge. "Oh ! replied the newsman, knowing his business too well to injure the respectability of the Cardinal's Hat, by owning he had seen him there, "oh, a fellow from some distant part—no one seems to know him further than that they call him the Blear-eyed Bully ; he's as tough as iron, for when he was put to the rack he only laughed, and told them 'to save their trouble, for that they might tear his flesh into a hundred mouths, but all the racks the fiends could muster, should not put a tongue into one of them ; and he has kept his word ; although it is well known he had accomplices, he has not betrayed a single name."

"No, nor will he," said saintly father Brassinjaw, who now looked smug and trim, and it being midday, was perfectly sober, and was now drinking a little sweetened water ; "no, they will wring nothing from him. I have visited him night and day, at the intercession of that good young man, Harry Horton, who, although too ill himself to come to his master's, has not forgotten the spiritual welfare of that poor lost creature."

In part this was true, for Horton had employed his friend the priest to act as the go-between for him to the Bully, who laughed at Horton's

fears, and sent him word to "Come to his execution, and see how a *man* could die."

"But what other news have you, good Master Knowy?" inquired Catchemayde; "how goes on the trial of the Queen?"

"Oh, her affair's so stale, it's scarcely worth the mentioning; but it will be a rather pretty execution on the 17th, when her five lovers are to die: Smeaton's to be hanged—the others lose their heads. That's all well enough; but it is vastly like playing with the people's patience, methinks—first to give out that we were to have a bonfire, made of a real right earnest Queen, and then, forsooth, to be put off in this way, with a mere slash-my-neck-and-it's-all-over."

"What!" said Silkworm the stringer; "is she only to have her head cut off, after all? then I shall not take the trouble to go and see it, I can tell 'em."

"Nor shall I," added Cheekleake.

"And I'm sure I won't!" chimed in Catchemayde.

"And I'm sure," said the newsman, "you're all right if you don't go, for you wouldn't see it if you did. Why, bless you! so tender-hearted is our good, dear, sweet King Harry, that not only has he refused to let her be burnt to death, for he was to do as he liked with her—which, by the by, he generally does with most people; but in case she might be put to the blush, sweet innocent, by honest folks looking at her, it's all to be done within the walls of the Tower, and nobody is to know the time: but I know the day—mum, the 10th—but keep that snug; and now listen to this, my masters—if this isn't a bit of favouritism, I don't know what is. Why, bless you, so afraid is the King that his dear Nanny should be hurt, that he has sent all the way to Calais for the French headsman. To be sure, we all know that *mounseer's* a pretty workman, a very pretty workman; and I believe it's a fact, that no one whose head he has once cut off has ever after been heard to complain of his method."

"No!" exclaimed all present.

"Never! at least I've heard so, and that's saying a great deal for one who has had it in his power to hurt the feelings of so many."

Here the saintly father Brassinjaw, giving the newsman a sly wink, and beckoning him forward, whispered into his ear—"Good Master Knowy, capst thou not, in all thy budget, scrape up a little morsel of—of innocent scandal? hush—mum—it gives a piquant seasoning to thy discourse, friend Knowy."

The newsman, catching at the hint, said—"By-the-by, were I but sure that it would go no further, I could give you, friends, a rare bit of tittle-tattle; but, no, I'd better keep it to myself, for were it known that I had set it floating——"

The moment he threw in a dash of mystery, that moment did every one present desire to learn more.

"And, besides, it were cruel to draw an honest neighbour into ridicule."

"I love to laugh at my neighbours," said Silkworm.

"And I'd rather laugh than cry at any time, or at any thing," added Catchemayde.



Knobby, the newsman, retailing a little bit of scandal

Here Brassinjaw began to snore, and pretended to go fast asleep.

"Come, Master Knowy, speak out, man," said Checklocke; "we love a bit of scandal, particularly about our own dear friends; and see, Brassinjaw is fast asleep, so you need fear to offend no one here."

"Well then," said Knowy, "it's about a certain person, not a hundred miles from this very house."

"Not Driggles," exclaimed one, "the lantern maker, whose wife broke his head with a ladle?"

"Or Bunks, the buttoner, who could not get up, for his wife had run away with his slops and his hose?" said another.

"Nearer than that," replied the newsman, "and his name begins with H."

"It can't be Master Hewet? No, you don't mean it?" and then they all got closer round the newsman, and Brassinjaw snored louder than ever; and then they all declared they would give a sound silver penny each of them, ay, that they would, if they could only get one good laugh at Master Hewet.

"Well then, my friends, give me but the silver pennies, and I'll give you the laugh," saying this he held round his cap, into which they threw broken pieces of money; for the penny was then coined with a deeply indented cross upon it, which, if broken one way, made two *half pennies*, if broken again the other way, it formed four *fourthings*, or as we now say *farthings*.

Having received a good round sum, for scandal was as high in the market then, as it has been since, he began by saying, "Now, remember, I say nothing, I know nothing, and therefore can tell nothing, but it is odd, isn't it?" They all nodded their heads, not that they had heard anything very odd yet, but they assented by anticipation, knowing that Master Knowy was no duper, but a true man and an honest.

"But it is odd, isn't it," said he, "that Master Hewet should have such a pretty wife?"

"Oh! come," said Catchemayde, "that won't do at all—no, no, there's nothing of scandal there, I'd be sworn."

"I didn't say there was—I only said it was odd—and it *is* odd, that twenty times a week, a dapper little page, more splendidly dressed than dapper little page was ever dressed before, should call on honest Master Hewet—I say on honest *Master Hewet*, and with him always brings some costly fruits from over seas, or else some lovely flowers.—Dame Alyce, so the story goes, is wondrously fond of fruits and flowers—now it's odd, but mind, I say nothing farther than it is odd, that Master Hewet's lovely wife is now no longer satisfied with a good pillion behind her loving lord, but needs must learn to ride upon a noble steed herself."

"Well, that is odd, I own," said Catchemayde.

"And it's odd, methinks, that the very horse she learns to ride upon belongs to the master of the dapper little page——"

"And who is he?" exclaimed more than one.

"I say not who, but only that it is odd—that on the left arm of this same page, the arms should there be found of young Sir Filbut Fussy!"

"No!" ejaculated a dozen at the least.

"And odder still it is, that he, who teaches the merchant's lovely wife

to ride, is rich Sir Filbut Fussy's self! But not a word, not a breath of what I've told you as being odd, for it's only odd, and nothing more, depend upon it. And now a right good day to you all, my worthy sirs." On this the newsman made his exit, determining, in his own mind, that now he had found out how well scandal was paid for, he would henceforth publicly announce himself as Master Knowy, the knowing scandal newsman.

The rest of the party, after making their several comments upon what they had heard, and uttering a few jokes at the expense of Master Hewet, determined to go past the merchant's in a body, and if the page, or Sir Filbut Fussy, should be there, to set up a horse laugh, and then run away. Fortunately for all parties, they were disappointed in their kind intention. The moment they had all left the room, Brassinjaw opened his eyes—but they had been pretty well opened by the newsman, and in a manner he had little expected: he was evidently greatly annoyed, and frowned prodigiously. He got up, put on his bonnet, and left the place muttering as he went—"She shall do a pretty penance for this, in purse as well as person. I'll not leave a bit of skin on her knees, nor a silver penny in her purse. I'm not angry with her for disliking her husband, for who *can* like the fellow—I have hated him ever since he refused to be one of my flock. Nor am I angry that she should discover beauties in the rich fool, Sir Filbut Fussy; no, for all this I might find absolution; but I'll never forgive her keeping the secret so snug from me. Why, properly used, it would have been a little fortune to me; but it may not yet be too late to do something in the matter." A short time after this, the saintly father Brassinjaw might be seen seated upon a little fat long-eared mule, that trotted along the road up Chancery Lane, then a lovely lane bordered by green hedges clothed in May's most tempting livery. The truth is that in a lonely cottage in the fields near Holbourne, Harry Horton had taken up his quarters, the whole tale of his own, or his father's illness being a mere subterfuge, an excuse for remaining away from his master's abode, until he saw how matters were likely to turn. Here he could unnoticed by any one carry on his schemes, and it was here that Sir Filbut Fussy was made to pay rather dearly for the assistance and advice of Horton in the conspiracy, carrying on against honest Master Hewet and his simple-minded lovely spouse. Brassinjaw was not so great a fool as to imagine that Harry Horton was not aware of all that had been going on under his master's roof, and was now on his way to come to an explanation, and to settle upon what terms he was either to speak out or to hold his peace; the scheme of villany concocted between them at this interview we must leave the incidents themselves to elucidate. But this much we may here relate, that Sir Filbut—the rich Sir Filbut—became one of the saintly father Brassinjaw's flock, and it occurred strangely enough, that father Brassinjaw's memory became suddenly so bad, that he was for ever appointing the same day, and the very same hour, for receiving the confessions both of Sir Filbut and the lovely Alyce, by which it naturally occurred that they were for ever meeting in the chapel of Saint Thomas of the Bridge, for as the reader may have perceived, Alyce was rather given to holy views, and Sir Filbut now became prodigiously religious.

It was Friday, the 19th of May, when, about the middle of the day, a single gun was heard to boom loudly from the Tower walls; at that moment, the head of the once madly-adored Queen of Henry the Eighth, the lovely Anne Boleyn, had fallen beneath the sword of the Calais executioner. So unexpected a sound naturally drew the inhabitants of Old London Bridge to the casements which looked towards the east. The hour of the Queen's execution had been kept a profound secret from the public, so that the awful scene was witnessed but by few. There were two circumstances connected with the death of this unfortunate creature, which, perhaps, as much as any, speak the heartless and cruel nature of her tyrant lord; the one was placing her as a prisoner in the very same apartments in the Tower in which she had slept the night before her coronation, when she had arrived from Greenwich in all the pomp that the wealth of this most wealthy city could lavish upon the aquatic pageant, to show devotion to the favourite of a King; the other was in fixing on the 19th of May for her death, that very day being the anniversary of her coming to the Tower. She arrived there on the 19th of May 1533, in all the pride of royalty, to ascend a throne—she left the Tower on the 19th of May 1536, in all the horrors of despair, to mount a scaffold.

The gun the citizens had heard was the signal to tell King Henry, who had gone hunting, that he was now a widower; and it is said, that when the anxiously-expected but welcome sound reached the heartless miscreant's ear, he ordered his attendants then to “slip the dogs, and let the chase begin.”

Now, although the good citizens had been prevented enjoying so rare a sight as that of gazing upon the first female blood that had ever flowed in England to stain a public scaffold, they had been, for some hours previously, feasting their eyes upon a different kind of death, which, from its lingering nature, the imagination can scarcely conceive ought more horrible—it was the execution of the Blear-eyed Bully. Crowds of boats, of all shapes and colours, covered the Thames below bridge, for the scene now taking place was one of rare occurrence, and consequently had drawn together an immense concourse of people.

The trial of the Blear-eyed Bully, as might be expected, was but a short affair; the evidence concerning the murder of the weaver was too powerful to admit of a moment's doubt; and the second murder, within the Court, could not for an instant be denied; indeed, the Bully knew himself to be so utterly lost, that he would not answer a single question, until put to the rack; and then he only gave the answer which we have already put into the mouth of the newsman. As the first crime had been committed upon the river, the sentence passed upon him was that he should die the death of water, that is, he should be chained to a pile, driven into the bed of the river at low water, and there remain until he had had three tides rise over him.

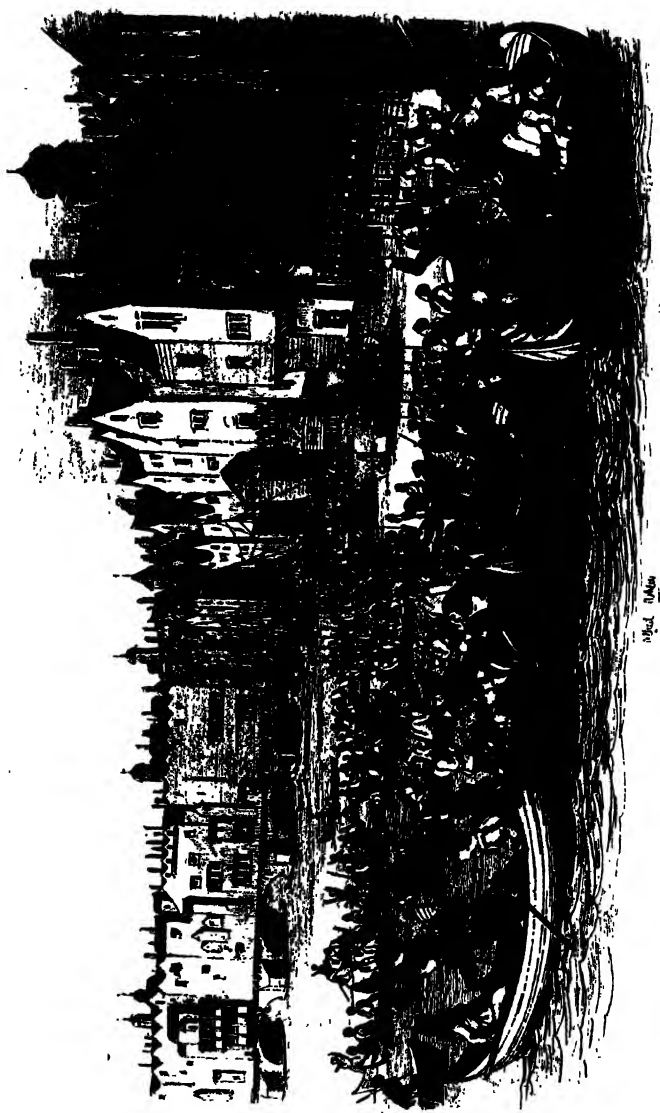
The spot appointed for the horrid exhibition was off the stairs at Billingsgate, as being a part of the river most frequented by the reckless portion of the city, and therefore well adapted to so striking an example. As early as six in the morning the preparations had began.

The water-bailiffs had arranged a semicircle of boats, containing their officers, all fully armed, at some distance around the fatal pile to which the poor wretch was to be bound, thus keeping an open space about the culprit, and at the same time preventing any chance of a rescue; for in those days such violent attempts were not infrequent, the inhabitants of the Clink, or of Alsasia, seldom allowing one of their body to be taken, or, if taken, to be executed, without at least a struggle for his freedom. The Blear-eyed Bully appeared to have no friends of this sort, for all who were present seemed to delight in the dreadful agonies they hoped the murderer would have to endure.

It had fallen to the lot of Checklocke, the smith, to be employed in fixing the staples and the chains to the strong pile. This gave him an opportunity of affording such a treat to his two sworn friends, Catchemayde and Silkworm, that they had never before known the like of. They acted as Checklocke's assistants, and held the boat steady, as he laboured away at his, to them all, most pleasing duty. In case that the struggles of so powerful a man as the Blear-eyed Bully should draw a staple, or otherwise damage the work, the smith's boat was ordered to remain close to the prisoner, so that they would be able to mark every change of feature: and didn't they make up their minds to enjoy themselves?

About an hour after the turn of tide, such a yelling, and shouting, and huzzaing, was heard, that it was not difficult to guess that the prisoner was on his way to death. Several got a good ducking in their eagerness to catch a glimpse of the Bully; for, in standing up suddenly, they overbalanced themselves, and upset their boats. There were, as may be supposed, not many of the windows of the Bridge-houses unoccupied, and all was noise, movement, and confusion. From the Bridge an excellent view was obtained, for the Bailiffs' boats keeping the space quite clear, everything close to the pile could be clearly distinguished. Presently, two boats put off; in the one sat the Blear-eyed Bully, strongly bound, and securely guarded; in the other, were the priests of St. Thomas of the Bridge, amongst them our saintly father Brassinjaw. To the front side of the pile had been affixed a sort of table to support the feet of the murderer; but this was now out of sight, the water having risen nearly two feet above it. A deafening shout burst forth as the Bully took his place upon the spot appointed, the water now reaching to his knees. A chain was then bound about his body and the pile, like a serpent, beginning at his feet, and coiling round and round upwards, till it finished by being passed twice around his neck, and fastened by a strong staple to the back of the pile: this was Checklocke's affair, and strongly enough did he drive the staple home, and then, looking insultingly into the face of the doomed man, asked him how he liked it? The only notice the Blear-eyed Bully took of him, was, to spit right in his eye, which dreadfully insulted Checklocke, and caused shouts of applause and laughter from those around.

Before the preparations were completed, the poor wretch could clearly feel the waters rising, and rising, slowly, it is true, but surely: what must have been the reflections of man in such a situation?—it is dreadful to contemplate! The guilt of murder on his soul—the ghosts of his



The Execution at Billingsgate.

victims shewing again in memory's fearful glass, like shadowy but bloody sentinels, watching until the moment when life's great commander, Death, should give the word to guard that soul into the prison-house of never-ending woe—to hear the writhings of affrighted nature made subjects of disgusting ribaldry and brutal jest! The Blear-eyed Bully bore his fate as though his soul had been wrought in steel. At every rising wave, the only change that even the priests, who never ceased to pray, to chant, and then exhort the dying man to repent, while yet it was time, could perceive, was a stronger compression of the lip, and a firmer fixing of the eye. His hands were fastened in the attitude of prayer, and between them was bound a crucifix. In this horrid situation, he had to be exposed for hours, for to him, death came too slowly; that comes so quickly to all who breathe the breath of hope—but his only hope was death! As the spectators grew tired, some moved away, and others rowed then nearer, to get a better view of the doomed murderer. So passed away the first dreadful hour—so the next; and on, and on, time sped his never varying course; and higher still up heaved the monster river, but, oh! so gently, that his deadly approach was scarcely felt or seen—like the hand upon a dial, its motion was only told by having reached a spot, that not long before we knew to be at a distance.

The people of the Bridge had almost vanished, for the monotony was tiresome; but still the waters rose; the crucifix that rested against his breast was now half hidden by the flood; and still the waters rose. Master Hewet and Edward Osborne kept their rooms that day, for they felt that in a degree they were mixed up with the wretched man who was then undergoing the dreadful expiation of all his crimes; the truth had been carefully concealed from Alyce, and the merchant had hitherto succeeded in keeping her to the front part of their dwelling; not so Flora Gray; although she had been commanded not to go out upon the balcony, peep she would, and let little Anne peep too, and more than peep, for she stood the child upon the upper edge of the balcony, and holding her fast, pointed out to her all that was moving upon the flood beneath.

The waters had now risen up to the very mouth of the murderer—the boats tried to get nearer and nearer, and even as far as the Bridge, which was again crowded, the murmur might be heard—"See, see, a few minutes, and it's all over with the wretch." The Blear-eyed Bully's eyes now protruded farther and farther, as despair seemed to take possession of his soul; he held back his head as far as the firm manner in which it had been placed, permitted, in the vain endeavour to raise his lips above the stream; this was indeed a moment fraught with death, for it was at that instant the gun was fired from the Tower.

The sudden sound of cannon made Alyce run into the lower balcony, thinking some pageant was passing by, when, who can paint her horror, as from the balcony above, she saw her only child fall headlong into the raging cataracts beneath! Her screams were frightful, as were those of Flora, who, startled at the sound of the cannon, had let loose her hold—the child was gone!

Of all the crowd of boats, not one dared shoot the Bridge to attempt the rescue of the child. But, oh, what a shout was heard, as Edward Osborne was seen to leap from the balcony's upper roof into the raging

flood! Did we say no boat dared attempt the falls? Yes, there was one, and only one; it had in it a single rower—that rower was the ragged lad, the fearless Shooter-of-the-bridge. In an instant he had brought his boat into the power of the resistless current; then turning to face the danger, he fixed his feet firmly against the board in front, threw back his body until it nearly lay upon the seats behind, and like an arrow shot through the Bridge, and down the fatal fall. The waters had done their dread vengeance upon the wretched murderer; the stream flowed smoothly o'er his guilty head, and all was over. The excitement now took a different turn; every boat hastened to the shores, the people landing hurried to the other side of the Bridge, to learn the fate of the merchant's lovely child, and that of the gallant Edward Osborne; these, after they had passed the falls of the Bridge, were seen tossed over and over by the rushing waves; and then came dashing through the no-less-gallant Bridge-shooter. Never were the instructions of a great master in any art more fully rewarded by success, than in the case of Edward Osborne. He buffeted the waves until he mastered their power sufficiently to allow him to call in the energies of his mind to direct his course; at last a loud peal of triumph rent the air, as the beholders saw, to their astonishment, the youth floating on the surface, and with one hand upholding his master's child. But there was one more to share his glory, the worthy master of such a pupil. Billy-the-bridge-shooter had that very moment proved his right to the title he so nobly bore, and his was the first boat that reached the almost-exhausted youth. Osborne, with the child still held close to his breast, was soon landed, and the mother and sire both kneeling in thankfulness at his feet.

Before we close this strange and eventful chapter, we are compelled to add one incident more, scarcely less strange, and certainly not less eventful to our coming tale, than those that have preceded it.

The day was passing rapidly away, when the changeling tide having done its worst upon the murderer, had long since been hurrying to the ocean to tell its tale of horror, and now was at its lowest. There still was seen the dead body chained to the fatal pile, for the law enacted that three tides should cover it. At this moment, a boat was seen coming up the river, in which a solitary passenger, with trunks and other things bespeaking the traveller, was being rowed towards the landing-place of Billingsgate. Before the stranger came very near the shore, he was horror-stricken at seeing the awful spectre, that seemed to be rising from out the flood. The waterman explained to him all that had occurred, when he no longer felt pity for such a wretch; but curiosity impelled him to make the man row as close as possible to the executed criminal. Indeed, so close had the man brought the boat, that when the stranger who was standing up in it turned round, his face came almost in contact with that of the dead man. He gave one horrid shriek, and falling backward, exclaimed—"Oh God, it is my brother!"



The Cripple of the Bridge gate Tower chanting the Song of the Stars.

CHAPTER VII.

. Alas !
 For in the starres, clearer than is glass,
 Is written, God wot, whoso could it read,
 The death of every man withouten drede.
 * * but mennës wittës be so dull,
 That no wight can well read it at the full.—CHAUCER.

NIGHT's azure mantle, spangled o'er with stars, seemed heaven-upheld to canopy the earth, and screen day's glaring light from off the sleeping world, as on the summit of that tower of death, the Traitor's Gate, the Cripple sate and mused. Then, all absorbed, his fingers gently strayed from string to string o'er that poor friendly lute, which oft before had solaced weary hours, and made the gall of disappointed nature flow for a time in kindness to man. He gazed up in the heavens, and paused to think—what wondrous tales of joy, of sorrow, virtue, and of vice, those stars might tell, were they but once to speak. Then fancy, flitting through his wandering brain, seemed, in each orb, to fix a living voice, and to his questions answered, as thus, unconsciously, the Cripple sang—

THE SONG OF THE STARS.

Starry sisters of the skies,
 Ye who are bright heaven's eyes,
 Look now on this world, and say,
 What may chance ere come the day?
 Whether weal or woe it be,
 Sisters, tell me all ye see!
 Hark! the stars, in heavenly quire,
 Answer to my bold desire;
 Singing softly in mine ear
 All that's passing far and near.

Yonder sits a fair one weeping,
 On her breast a babe lies sleeping;
 But the wretch who caused her sorrow,
 Doomed is he to know no-morrow.
 See, he flies! remorse, pursuing,
 Drives him to his own undoing.
 Now he steepers his hands in blood—
 Now he dies beneath the flood
 Thus, the stars, in heavenly quire,
 Answer to my bold desire;
 Singing softly in mine ear
 All that's passing far and near.

Merrily roar yon blazing fires—
 Merrily laugh yon duncing fires;
 Laugh, they may, for they've possession
 Of a poor old maid's confession.
 Now they count their glittering gold,
 Gained for pardons they have sold;
 Deep in vice their senses steeping,
 Drunk with wine, they now lie sleeping.

Thus the stars, in heavenly quire,
 Answer to my bold desire ;
 Singing softly in mine ear
 All that's passing far and near.

In the East the plague is raging—
 In the West fierce war is waging—
 In the North a king lies dying—
 In the South are rebels flying.
 East, West, North, or South—the game
 This world plays, is e'er the same.
 And day by day the like shall be
 Repeated to eternity.

Thus the stars, in heavenly quire,
 Answer to my bold desire ;
 Singing softly in mine ear
 All that's passing far and near.

Whoo-oo-ooop! whoo-oo-ooop! whoo-oo-ooop! "What, singing too, my own sweetheart," said the Cripple, turning and smiling upon an old grey owl that stood perched upon a part of the tower near him; "we have had many a night-song together, sweet one, have we not?" Whoo-oo-ooop! hooted again the owl, as if answering his inquiry. "And many we'll have yet, I hope," he added, tenderly stroking his hand down the feathers of the bird. "What, you like it, do you, Fairy? But I'm sure you do, or your wings had not been thus outspread. Do you know, Fairy, I have often wondered which of us twain be the most lovely—you or I? we are marvellously handsome, both of us. Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he——!" and the poor Cripple laughed at his own conceit until the tears came into his eyes. "But the worst of you, old wife, is that you never laugh. I never yet have seen a feature of your pretty face smile once. Why not do as I do?—the world laughs at me for my lack of beauty—I laugh at the world for it's lack of sense; but you and I have the best of it, depend upon it, for you'll ever find the book of folly bound up in the most costly casing; while the true diamond, wisdom, is mostly found in rough, unsightly clods of earth. Laugh, then, pretty one—laugh, an' you love me, dear!" Saying this, the Cripple playfully tapped his forefinger upon the bill of the owl, who for a time endured this freedom with stoic gravity; but apparently thinking he was going a little too far, spread out her wings, and was soon perched above on one of the mouldering heads that stood upon the loftiest of the pikes. "What, my old wife run away? like the world—like the world! Spoil your wife and lose your wife—it was always so, and always will be so. Come back, you silly thing; for if King Harry sees the company you've flown to, he'll swear you're a popish bird, and hang you. Why, that's the head of John Houghton, the Prior of Charter-House, you fool! I stuck it up there a year ago; and all around you are his brother Carthusian monks; you cannot be in company more dangerous? Come back, and prove you hate the Pope, by taking the oath of Hal's supremacy directly, or I shall have a pretty job of work; think if I have to stick my own old wife's head up as a traitor! Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he——!" And he chuckled at the idea. Then again seizing the

lute, and casting a melancholy look towards the bird of the night, the Cripple sang, in a plaintive strain—

Death is here, and death is there,
And death is round us every where ;
Then do not let us quarrel more,
For, oh ! so few the hours of bliss,
That bloom upon life's barren shore,
'Twere madness not to treasure this

Sure every moment of this life,
Should be the parent of a smile,
Not wasted thus in angry strife—
Such were God's goodness to revile.

Then let our future life be past,
Encircled by love's holiest spell,
As though we deemed each hour the last—
Our last it may be !—who can tell ?
For death is here, and death is there,
And death is round us every where.

The owl made a movement as if relenting, and about to descend upon the outstretched arm of the Cripple, but was checked by the sound of a voice. So unexpected was it, that the Cripple starting grasped his staff, and stood upon his guard. A figure appeared within the turret doorway. A moment more, and the Cripple dropping his trusty weapon, sent forth his well-known screeching laugh, for he recognised the comer—it was Edward Osborne !

"Well," said he, "this is indeed an honour the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower could little dream of. Why, boy ! you are the only living mortal that has ventured here, besides myself, for I know not how many a-day. So few that do get up here, ever get down again, that I'm not over pestered by calling friends. What ails you ?—you tremble, boy !"

"I do," replied Edward, "I own I do, not only at finding myself thus suddenly surrounded by all these ghastly evidences of violence and death—but I have had my nerves unstrung—have had my reason made to totter, my eyes to doubt their power of vision—or seeing, see not what they seem to see. Willy ! you professed, unasked, to be my friend ; I now demand fulfilment of such profession. You are the last in all this mighty city that most would come to, craving a kindly favour ; you are the first I have ever asked a favour from."

"Why, boy, you overpower me with your flattery !" said the poor Cripple, who smiled with evident pleasure at finding at last one soul on earth, who thought him worthy of his confidence. "What can so humble, so poor, so *ugly* a wretch as I am, do to pleasure one whom nature has stamped as her own especial favourite."

"Willy, they tell me you have a beauty in your mind, which far outweighs in others, their beauteousness of form."

"Ha, ha ! ho, ho ! he, he——! And pray, boy, what may my great beauty be ? Wonders will never cease ; the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower will no doubt yet be found Adonis in disguise. But, tell me, lad, and

tell me quickly, for I cannot too soon know my charms, what may my wondrous beauty be?"

"TRUTH!" replied Osborne.

"Truth!" echoed the Cripple; "and is Truth, then, in your eyes, so dazzling bright, that it blinds you to all else around? But in bestowing on me that gem, you raise me to the very throne of Solomon; you make me the king of wisdom; for believe me it is only the really wise, who always act by truth: your liars and your rogues, and these are terms synonymous, for a lie can lie in deed as well as word, are ever fools—they always in the end, by their deceit, lose tenfold what they gain—mark that through life, and that you'll find's a sterling truth. Now, lad, although I cannot claim the high distinction you would honour me withal, I promise one thing, for I *am* your friend, that what I say to you shall team with nought but truth."

"It is feeling that," said Osborne, "which now has made me seek you. I heard you singing from the tower; I waited awhile in the dark below, until I conjured up such frightful visions that I dared no longer stay alone, so mounted up the dismal winding stairs, made still more dismal as the light of night stole through the loop-holes, and caused fantastic shapes like spectres against the wall. But let us descend, for this is an awful place to put the question I would ask your truth to answer."

"Fear not," said the Cripple, "these are my children, and never tell tales of what their father says or does. What is the question?"

"Willy," replied Osborne, drawing nearer to the Cripple, and almost whispering his words, "do you believe the dead ever again can walk this earth—can come again so palpable to sight, that to doubt your eyes would be to doubt your reason?—do you believe in ghosts?" He had scarcely uttered the word, when he had nearly fallen over the parapet from fear, for the owl, flying down as it uttered its melancholy cry, fixed itself upon his head.

The laugh of the Cripple rather added, at that moment, to Osborne's terror, than allayed it; but the owl having been invited by the Cripple, half flew, half walked, or fluttered, along his extended arm, and settled itself upon his shoulder.

The youth, who was no coward but in affairs of superstition, and superstition was the governing power of that age, soon rallied; and the Cripple, to relieve young Osborne of his fear, having consented to descend, Edward led the way, having no wish to be left alone in such a melancholy spot, while his mind was still so much excited.

As he crept down the dark winding stairs, he heard the Cripple above bidding a kind good night to all his children, and admonishing them to watch, and not fall down asleep, as sometimes they did. The Cripple, then closing the turret door, followed Osborne to the lodge below.

Although it was the month of May, and warm too for that time of year, a blazing fire was burning. A lamp was soon lighted, when the owl began to whoop; but being kissed by the Cripple, and tossed up, it flew upon the top of an old oaken press, in a corner deep in shade, and there perched itself for the night in melancholy dignity.

The Cripple then, humming an air, hobbled about; he first hung up a thick sort of curtain over the little casement, through which he had thrust his head on the night he addressed Sir Filbut Fussy—"For," said he, "the good folk of the Bridge are mighty curious, and are for ever prying into my domestic habits—what do they expect to see? believe me, there are many a stranger scene to be witnessed in houses I could name, and on the Bridge too, than ever passed within the Bridge-gate Tower."

He next brought forth three trenchers, on one of which was a piece of salted beef, the usual food of the humbler class for more than half the year, with bread and salt, and a flagon of sweet ale; then drawing a large pot, or saucepan, that stood upon the hob, further on to the fire, he seated himself, and looked into Osborne's face; then pointing to the food, said—"Now you are more at your ease, repeat your question, and I'll answer it—that is, if it please me so to do, for I am rather wary, and speak, or hold my tongue, by fits and starts: but warm yourself, and drink, for I know of no power to exorcise or lay your midnight spectres, half so certain as a blazing fire and a flagon of bright strong ale."

Young Osborne, who had come with a mind predisposed to believe every word the Cripple uttered, took a right good draught of ale; then seeing his Mentor draw forth his girdle-knife, a sort of dagger, he did the same, and each, with his left hand, seizing upon the opposite sides of the salted beef—they at once severed a slice a-piece, and placed it upon their trenchers.

Osborne felt little inclination to eat, for his mind was full of the strange things he wished to lay open to the Cripple; so, placing his hand, still holding the knife, upon the table, he ~~leaned~~ ^{leaned} across towards his companion, and said—"If ever the dead were permitted to revisit this our earth—the dead has appeared to me!"

So solemnly did Osborne pronounce this awful conviction of his mind, that the Cripple paused from the work he was upon, and gazed in wonder at the youth.

"You know the wretch whose death I was the cause of, though justly? Upon his sentence being passed, he made all who heard him shudder by calling loudly upon the fiends of hell to permit his dark spirit to follow me and mine, through life. He bade me guard well my midnight couch by prayer, or I should see him as sure as the clock should strike the dead hour of night. Now, Willy, although I know that Heaven's power can easily keep in check the fiends of darkness, yet, I must own, that such a denunciation, after all the horrors I had witnessed, followed too by the dreadful death he suffered, made so deep an impression upon my mind, that when night came, I listened to the tolling of St. Paul's great bell with fear and horror. I have wrought my mind to such a pitch of nervous dread, that I cannot close my eyes of nights until the fatal hour be passed. Not knowing what to do, and seeing my mistress's confessor, the father Brassinjaw, leaving our house, I foolishly entreated him to advise me. Instead of comforting, he has taken from me even the hope I had, and tells me that all I suffer is a just punishment for not before becoming one of his flock. He has

ordered me to attend the midnight prayers in the chapel of St. Thomas-of-the-Bridge ; last night I did."

Here he was interrupted, and made to start, by the sudden boiling over of the pot, upon the fire—the frightened owl, too, gave a scream, and flew to another dark corner of the room ; trifles as these were, they added not a little to his fear. The Cripple, laughing, pushed the sauce-pan off the fire, lifted the lid, and stirring the contents round with a wooden spoon, again covered them, and desired Osborne to proceed.

Osborne, drawing a deep breath, continued—" Yes, Willy, last night I attended at the appointed prayers : few persons were there besides the priests, and when the service was ended, I fell upon my knees to pray for ease of mind, and becoming so absorbed in the fervour of my devotions, I did not perceive all else had left the place, save one man, who was extinguishing the lights upon the altar. As I rose to quit the chapel, I was startled by seeing the figure of a man standing in a gloomy corner ; he was enveloped in a dark mantle, and motionless as death. I had to pass that spot. I kept my eyes fixed upon the figure—I knew not why ; when, just within arms reach, it suddenly threw open the mantle, and there I beheld, if e'er my eyes saw truly, the ghost of him who had so lately suffered for his crimes. He stood before me in the very habit in which he died. I covered my eyes for an instant with my hands, for I feared to look upon it, and when I had gained courage to do so, the figure was gone, but in its place I found this written paper. In stooping to seize it, I fancied I again saw the shadow gliding down the steps leading to the crypt below. A sudden feeling of courage animated my soul, and I would have followed, but was prevented by father Brassinjaw, who, at that moment, ascended by those very steps. I exclaimed—" Let me pass ! let me pass !—'tis there ! 'tis there ! " He held me back, and when I explained what I had seen, he smiled at my credulity, and shewed me how impossible it was that ought could have descended to the crypt, and he not see it. He told me to hasten home, and, for the future, to be obedient to whatever commands he might lay upon me, as the only means of relieving myself from the power of evil spirits, who certainly then possessed me. I did return home, but not to sleep, but to ponder over and over the contents of this paper, which I had, unconsciously, brought from the chapel, held with convulsive power within my grasp. It is evidently written in blood ; look at it—look at it, Willy, and tell me what you think ?"

The Cripple took the paper, and read it aloud—" *If you would avoid the miserable fate the fiends have doomed you to, seek the right road, by consulting the witch of the marsh. To-morrow night, at ten, the moon is at the full ; be there, but be alone—remember, be alone, or a more dreadful doom awaits you, than that of the shade, which, from the grave, now warns you. No mortal must know what you this night have seen—remember !*"

" Were I to say," observed the Cripple of the Bridge, " that there were no such things as ghosts or witches in this world, I should assert that, which neither you, nor wiser men than you, would credit. There must be witches, we know, or the good priests would never condemn so many poor old women to be burnt alive for witchcraft ; and as to ghosts, I never met with man,

or woman, or child, who would dare deny them. The only point which staggers my reason is, why should that spirit which, while yet it was the habitant of mortal clay, called for curses upon your head, now visit the earth, not to fulfil those curses, but to warn you how to avoid their malignant power. But these are matters far too subtle for mortal ken—we must, like other miracles, receive them, nor seek to learn the power by which they are worked."

"But how would you have me act?" inquired Osborne.

"Go, and go unfearingly," said the Cripple; "the spirit means no harm, or it had chosen some other witch; she is, if I mistake not, the mother of your new-made friend; therefore, if she have power to raise up devils, she will have power, too, to prevent their hurting him who fought to save her. Where is her son?"

"Oh, far away," replied Osborne. "Ever since we saved my master's child, the merchant has befriended the poor Bridge-shooter, and has now sent him, as a safeguard to the merchandize they are shipping, some miles down the river."

"And Hewet, where is he?"

"The merchant and Hoxton are both at Hampton Court; for, by Cromwell's intercession, Master Hewet is now one of King Henry's merchants; he has gone to take orders from his Highness for stuffs for our new Queen's coronation."

"Then his wife is left alone; she must be very dull," said the Cripple.

"She would be," replied Osborne, "but for the kindness of Sir Filbut Fussy, who sometimes comes and reads and sings, to amuse her, for hours together."

"Indeed," said the Cripple, "he is wondrously kind!" Then again stirring the saucepan, he hummed—

We must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Len;
We must set a man to watch
For this poor La-dee."

"Then you advise me, Willy, to go to the marshes to-morrow night at the tenth hour," said Osborne, "and alone?"

"I do; for who knows what the stars may portend?" replied the Cripple. "And now home to rest; for it must be on the stroke of midnight."

Osborne turned suddenly pale, prayed to be allowed to remain until after that dreaded hour had passed. "I should be less fearful," said he, "if even my master were at home."

"Your master! curse him!" said the Cripple; "but I shall boil his head yet—I shall boil his head yet!" and then he chuckled again, and began to stir round the smoking cauldron.

"What do you mean," said Osborne, "by that disgusting phrase you are so frequently repeating?"

"What do I mean?" replied the Cripple, still chuckling and stirring the steaming pot; "what do I mean?"—the deep sound of St. Paul's bell began to toll the twelfth hour, as he continued—"this is what I

mean," and saying which, he thrust a hook into the cauldron, and drew thence a human head!

"Horror!" exclaimed Osborne, trembling all over; for in the features he recognised those of the Blear-eyed Bully!

"Ho, ho! ha, ha! he, he!—foolish boy," said the Cripple, "fear it not; but I had forgotten at the moment whose head it was. It was brought this afternoon for me to prepare for being hung up upon a gibbet to-morrow, as a warning to all those dear, kind creatures, who take delight in committing murders upon the Thames. There, there it is in again, and the lid on, so calm your fears. This is the second head I have boiled to-day, the other was of a very different mould; it was that of a poor monk they executed this morning, because he would not forswear his conscience, and take an oath that the Pope was Anti-Christ, and that King Henry was so pure, that he ought to be supreme head of our Holy Church. The poor creature would have been saved; but your master's sweet friend, the blacksmith minister, the great Cromwell, who they say is soon to be a lord, swore that if the jury did not find him guilty, and hang him up, he'd hang them up instead."

Cromwell was ever a bitter enemy to the poor monks; they were executed by hundreds, and the statement of the Cripple is no fancy sketch, but a fact of history, and clearly shews how little chance there was of justice in those days; for if the jury might be thus threatened, it was not likely the judges, who were more immediately within the King's power, would be left to their own free will in pronouncing judgment. Whatever the King willed was lawful; for no matter how atrocious the crime to be committed,—whether the mere cutting off the head of one wife that he might marry some favoured mistress—or burning a poor wretch because he had a conscience (a dangerous article in those days), and adding to the last agonies of that man's dreadful death, by bringing the wife and children to the pile, that while he burnt he might witness their sufferings at his awful fate; but such was the case, but the King willed it, therefore it was lawful; or, if not, there were plenty of miscreants basking in the royal favour, to pass new acts making it so. There never was, perhaps, in any one reign since the world began, so much law and so little justice, as during the latter part of that of the heartless tyrant, Henry the Eighth. And yet never was the truth, "that out of evil cometh good," more fully exemplified; for it was to his very vices we owe the glorious reformation of our Church. Had he never discovered his marriage with the widow of his brother Arthur to have been unlawful, which, strange to say, he did not until after he had fallen madly in love with one of his wife's maids of honour, Anne Boleyn, this kingdom had still remained in thralldom to the Pope of Rome. But how was it, that after eighteen years of marriage, this most religious King happened to make so notable a discovery? Did it arise from some sudden inspiration sent by Heaven to point out the sinful life he had been so long living with a most virtuous princess? No; but from her handmaiden proving more virtuous than he had expected! With a heartless wretch, like Henry, impediments but added fuel to the fire of his desires, which bursting forth with renewed vigour after every check, in the end consumed all that came within its annihilating influ-

ence: the power of the Pope (the last but greatest), for six years had held even the temper of Henry in subjection. When, at last, the King found that truckling to the Roman Pontiff availed him nothing, and that after all the weary delay that he had endured, his haven of bliss seemed as far off as ever, he took the weapon into his own hands, and with one bold and determined stroke, severed for ever the Gordian knot which had for ages tied the fetters of Rome upon our English Kings, and made them slaves to priestcraft. The first act of his own liberty was to destroy all liberty around him. He proclaimed himself the supreme head of the Church in England; but what anomalies did his acts produce! He professed to be a Roman Catholic, yet denied the power of Rome; he worshipped the body of that Church, but tore out its heart, for the Pope is in verity the heart of that ancient faith, for through him its whole blood flows—his cardinals and his priests are the arteries and the veins conveying the life-blood to the remotest members of the body throughout the world. Such a blow came with but an ill-grace from one like Henry, who had formerly so manfully stood up the champion of Rome against the great reformer, Martin Luther, whose voice was now thundering through the world. Indeed, so highly had the Pope approved of Henry's work, in answer to Luther, that he bestowed upon him the high-sounding title of "Defender of the Faith," which, oddly enough, has been retained by all succeeding Protestant English monarchs.

Having thrown off the shackles of the see of Rome, it was an easy matter to find Bishops and colleges but too anxious to prove their devotion to the new head of the Anglo-Roman Church, by granting his heart's great desire, a divorce from Catherine of Arragon, and performing the holy rites of marriage between him and his late Queen's maid of honour, the fair Anne Boleyn. She being a favourer of the new doctrine, Wolsey, Fisher, and More, were soon brought to ruin or the block. The Bible was now not only printed in the English language, but high and low were commanded to read and study the holy work; and that there might be no excuse for neglecting such a duty, a law was passed compelling the head of every church to provide a copy, to be chained to a desk within the sacred pile, for general use. Those of the humbler classes who could read, were invited to do so aloud to their more ignorant neighbours; and thus it was that the word of God first took root in the hearts of the English people. This was the second greatest step towards Protestantism, but that it should prove so, was not the intention of Henry. Now Henry, having cut off the head of the pontifical power, found the limbs but incumbrances, so began to lop them off one by one, and occasionally in greater numbers; but the time for their total annihilation had not yet arrived. The great delight of Henry seemed to be in burning those who refused to follow the Romish religion, and in hanging those who followed it too closely. If they denied his supremacy in holy matters, it was of little consequence which persuasion they followed; there were but two roads to go, the one led to the flames, the other to the gibbet.

It was, as the Cripple said, the head of one of these poor conscientious, though, perhaps, mistaken creatures, that he had that evening been fixing upon the tower, just before Osborne visited him there.

Osborne, feeling not only honor, but disgust, to see the unconcerned manner in which the Cripple fulfilled his dreadful duty, bade his companion a hearty good night, and hurried away.

There were few places in London more melancholy in appearance, than the road across Old London Bridge at midnight, the over-hanging buildings, in many places, nearly shutting out the little light the stars might wish to lend; and then the irregular line of houses, here projecting, here receding; now a deep dark recess, as if made purposely for the concealment of some lurking robber, would startle the wayfarer, making him instinctively fly to the other side for safety; now the long tunnel-like archways would seem as portals to the realms of darkness; and, hark! what sound was that? nought but the ever-roaring waters passing with angry speed beneath the Bridge.

Edward Osborne, whose mind, as the reader may imagine, was at this moment painfully alive to all external influences, was presently startled by hearing, at no great distance from him, sounds of sweetest music. He stopped—he listened; then creeping onwards with noiseless tread, and taking advantage of one of those deep recesses we have just noticed, he was enabled to watch, unseen, a party of dark figures, enveloped in cloaks and masks, who were performing beneath the window, as he thought, of his master's house. He had approached so close, that not a syllable escaped his ear; and thus he heard the midnight minstrels sing—

• The stars are bright, are bright indeed,
But we know something brighter still;
'Tis not the dew-bespangled mead,
Nor moonlight dancing on the rill:
'Tis not the northern meteor's light,
Nor glowworm's tiny lamp so clear;
'Tis not the diamond, sparkling bright—
But 'tis the eye of Alyce, dear.
Then wake, dear Alyce, wake, we pray—
And let thine eyes change night to day.

Sweet is the breath of early morn,
But we know something sweeter far;
'Tis not the mellow-sounding horn
That lulls to rest the last pale star;
'Tis not the violet, nor the rose,
Nor that sweet hour when day-light dies,
Like infant, sinking in repose—
But 'tis the sunlight of those eyes.
Then wake, dear Alyce, wake, we pray,
And let thine eyes change night to day.

Did his ears deceive him? No, the name of Alyce floated on the enraptured breeze, and echo, holding up her glass, reflected again the gentle sound. He could not be mistaken. But who would dare to sing thus openly the praises of his lovely mistress? 'Tis true, that another Alyce, and with bright eyes too, dwelt on the opposite side; and she was known to use those bright eyes for other purposes than reading prayers, unless indeed such prayers as love alone can write within the volume of imploring looks.

Such were the thoughts of Edward, during the pause between the

verses ; but, as the second strain began, he fancied he must be dreaming, for surely he saw the figure of a female, half concealed, standing by the casement of his master's room ; and, presently, a white hand stole gently to the latch that held the window close, and then the lattice slightly moved, as if to admit the sound more clearly ; but all was evidently done with greatest caution, that those without should know not that their flattery was listened to.

The serenaders having finished their task, or fancying they heard the night-watch coming, moved away. As they passed the spot where Osborne stood concealed, one or two of the voices sounded familiar to his ear : the only words he could distinguish, for the party moved rapidly along, were—" Be not afraid, success is certain ; Alyce—" All else died away, amidst the confused noise of the falling waters.

Osborne, the moment they were past, hurried to the spot they had left, and gazed, not at his master's house, for he could not bring his mind to believe that Alyce Hewet, the angelic Alyce Hewet, could possibly be the subject of any lover's midnight adoration, but his eye was directed to the opposite dwelling : all there was still. He looked, and looked, till fancy half pictured the form of Alyce Vaughan, their young and pretty neighbour, sitting by her latticed window.

Having now quite satisfied his mind that it must be she, whose charms had called forth the praises he had heard, he opened his own door ; but, as he entered, he thought he saw another figure issuing from a recess, like the one he had himself occupied, and stealthily creep along in the same direction the serenaders had taken.

His thoughts suddenly reverting to the shadowy form he had seen in the chapel, he hastily entered and closed the door,

CHAPTER VIII.

But down on knees went every maner wight,
And thanked him with all their heartes might.—CHAUCER.

" God's blood, man ! what do you fear ? Am I so terrible a monster, that the very sight of me should make you tremble like a love-sick girl as she first confesses her naughty passion, before her frowning priest ? Arise, and speak out boldly what you have to say."

These words were addressed by the giant, Henry the Eighth, King of England, to Master William Hewet, who humbly knelt before his Highness, in the beautiful gardens of Hampton Court. At some little distance behind Master Hewet, was Harry Horton, also kneeling.

At the King's command they both arose, but kept their eyes most modestly fixed upon the earth, as if dreading the refulgent rays that needs must encircle a royal brow, and which might blind them with their dazzling lustre.

" You owe me no thanks," said the King ; " take them all to our trusty and well-beloved Cromwell ; 'tis he to whom they are justly due. Now, merchant, shew me thy stuffs and wares."

Upon this Horton advanced, for in his charge were all the samples they had brought, and sinking upon one knee he held up the various cases, that Henry might see to what wondrous perfection the looms and handy-works of various nations had been brought.

"For such variety, Master Hewet," said the King, "you must have ransacked half the world: hast thou many ships?"

"Thanks to your Highness for teaching us how to build them, and the royal encouragement ever held out to all who would advance the knowledge of the sea, I have many—and such as would do the King's Highness good service, were a foreign foe to threaten his now thrice happy shores."

"Well spoken, merchant; but we think while bluff King Hal—ha, ha, you blush, do you, for you see I know how the villains of the city profane our royal name—no, no, while bluff King Hal shall reign, we need fear no foreign foe; send thy ships whither thou wilt in peace: to what lands do they mainly sail?"

Master Hewet was so delighted at the King's affability, and feeling himself addressed upon a subject in which his soul delighted, started off, almost forgetful of the royal presence. "They sail, your Highness, principally to Brazil and Guinea; to Sicily, Candia, and Chio, Cyprus, and Tripoli, and even to Barutti in Syria."

"And carry away all your poor King's gold, I suppose?"

"Not so, your Highness; we take out woollen cloths and calf skins, and in exchange bring silks and camblets, rhubarb, malmsey, muscadell, and other wines, oils, cotton, wool, rich Turkey carpets, galls, and spices——"

"Tut, tut, tut, man!" exclaimed the King, "we want not the ledger of our Custom-house rehearsed; pay but the duties, and I'll forgive the items." He then again looked over every article, asking innumerable questions; then turning to a page who waited at a distance—made a sign which appeared to be perfectly understood, for the page hurried away towards a gay and noble party, then enjoying the shade of a wide spreading avenue of majestic trees. The whole assemblage was magnificent in the extreme, and seemed to be attending upon one lovely creature, with perfect adulation. This beauty might, with but little stretch of the imagination, have been mistaken for Venus's self, paying a visit to Flora's bower. The instant the page approached, she made a slight, but gracious courtesy to all around, left them, and hastened towards the King.

"Come hither, sweetheart," said Henry as she approached; then taking her hand he placed it within his own arm, and smiling at her, "Now, Jane," said he, "let me see if thou be a thrifty housewife, or a careless jade, as I have known some to become, when made mistress of their husband's purse, as well as heart. Try thy skill at bating down this unconscionable jew of a merchant, who, did he have his way, would leave our exchequer as bare as the Pope would have done, had I not clipped his nails, or rather, I should say, cut off his hands, and thus made him give up his hold upon our land."

Queen Jane, for it was she, the late Jane Seymour, servant to the Queen just dead, but now herself Queen of England, appeared at once



to have gained right royal ideas of extravagant magnificence; nothing was too costly, nothing was too splendid; but she had such a meek, and humble way of expressing her desires, that the enraptured King felt himself to be the delinquent, in giving way to such wicked extravagance as they were then pursuing.

"You are tired, love," said the King, looking anxiously into the blue eyes of his newly-made wife, "we will choose no more to-day; to-morrow, Hewet, we will dismiss you. I hope my people have cared for you while you have been at the court?" Hewet bowed, as did Horton, who now catching the eye of the King, Henry said—"Stand forth, young Sir; are you my merchant's apprentice, Henry Horton?"

Both Horton and Hewet could not disguise their surprise at such a question coming from the King, who, laughing, added, "You see, friend Hewet, a King has eyes and ears, that extend far beyond the walls of his palace. I know more of you and yours than you dream of; for instance, you have a monstrous pretty wife. Don't be jealous, Jane! But I must see her, Hewet; I must call and see her—I'm fond of pretty wives!"

Hewet and Horton felt that it required no ghost to tell them that; but touching the King's threatened visit to his wife, the merchant thought it was an honour he could very well dispense with.

"Is she musical?" said the King; "I love music, although I'm but an indifferent musician."

Hewet, who knew human nature well enough, to be quite aware that no one, be he King or pedlar, was ever yet offended at being praised, and now, having a legitimate opportunity of offering his humble mite of incense, on the altar of Henry's talents, boldly exclaimed—

"Upon that point. I must venture to tell the King's Highness, that not only I, but all the world, differ from him. The voice of nations has proclaimed those two great works, the masses, composed by your Highness, to be wonderful productions of inspired genius." This assertion of Master Hewet's was not far from the truth; for Henry was not only an excellent performer upon several musical instruments, but the composer of two full masses, besides many other smaller pieces, possessing much merit.

"Hewet, you are a traitor," said the King, evidently pleased with the merchant's well-timed flattery, "you are a traitor, to deny the word of your King; and, God's blood, man! you shall die the death, unless you can gain favour in this fair lady's eyes to intercede for you: well, well, Jane, let him live. But you have not yet answered my question, my trusty merchant of the bridge. Is your pretty wife fond of music?"

Hewet assured the King that she doated on the sweet science.

"Then take good heed, Master Hewet, for see her I will. But whom did she study under?"

If the King had raised the ponderous battleaxe, or double-handed sword, with which he usually fought at the tournaments, and had let them fall upon poor Hewet's head, he would not have felt more stunned, nor bewildered, than he did upon hearing this simple question.

"Well man, hast thou no tongue?" said the King; "is Henry to command twice before he be obeyed?"

The trembling merchant dropping his eyes upon the earth, said, in a faltering voice, "His name, dread sire, was—Mark Smeaton!"

It was now the King's turn to feel awkward. The Queen was evidently confused; and a dark scowl came over Henry's features as he said—"Indeed! then as you have a pretty wife, be thankful that I have hanged the worthless dog."

Hewet and Horton remained motionless, nor did they venture to raise their eyes, until they felt that the King and Queen had moved far away.

They now escaped as quickly as possible from the vicinage of the royal party, and walking into the most secluded portion of the grounds, seated themselves upon a bank, and gave way to their uncomfortable reflections: they were silent for at least half an hour, when at last Horton said, almost to himself—"How could the King's Highness have known my name?" Horton like all human beings, thought of his own affairs first, nor troubled himself much at the awkward plight his master had got into.

"How could the King's Highness," replied the merchant, "have thought of asking me such a question? It seems that pretty wives are always getting their husbands into trouble. I've offended the King, I shall be dismissed with disgrace, be laughed at in the city, and perhaps thrown into a dungeon: was there ever such an unfortunate wretch as I? What can I do?—what can I say?—how shall I act?"

"Be dumb!" said a voice, close to where they sat; but it was a voice which made them start to their feet, and then fall on their knees—it was that of the King. "Be dumb upon what has happened," he said, advancing, "and fear nothing. You did but obey my commands; always do that, and I will forgive even a greater offence than the one you have now committed." Then motioning Horton to retire out of hearing, he continued—"If you are to be my city merchant, as Cromwell desires you should be, remember, I do not merely buy your stuffs, but your eyes, your tongue, your ears, nay, your very soul. I require a trusty agent in the city, who is well approved by his neighbours, and I have chosen Master Hewet. The knaves are growing too wealthy, and perhaps I may require you to tell them so; but all such matters will come through Cromwell."

Master Hewet began to understand, that Kings' favours are not always granted for nothing; and he had already a slight misgiving that he should, in one way or the other, have to pay pretty dearly for the honour of being styled the royal merchant; but it was too late to recede; so he kept continually bowing his approval of every design propounded by the King.

This mute, but ready acquiescence to all his wishes, brought Henry once more into boisterous good-humour; and having told the merchant to call "the lad," he surprised them both by saying—"Horton's time of service is nearly expired—is it not?"

Both master and man here bowed.

"Have you any objection," he said, chuckling at his own intended wit, "to transfer his indentures to one Harry Tudor, a worthy, respectable, hard-working man, in his vocation? he is a large manufacturer of

titles, and mends holes in great men's estates; by patching them up with heiresses; he also deals in coronets, and often gets cheated by his customers, who seldom make good their promised payments; he deals in a wholesale way at times, and has vast stores in many ports, as well as in London—know you such a dealer?"

Hewet and Horton were too much delighted at finding the King in such good humour not to chime in with his conceit, so put on looks of perfect innocence, as if they found it impossible to guess whom the King could really mean.

"Well then," said Henry, "if you recognise him not by the name of Harry Tudor, I'll warrant ye, ye scurvy city knaves, that you know him well enough if I call him bluff King Hal—he wants an apprentice, and proposes to take Horton off your hands; what say you?"

The merchant knew not what to say, doubting how much the King meant as a joke, how much for earnest.

Observing Hewet's embarrassment, and perceiving the Queen with her ladies approaching, Henry told them to wait upon Cromwell, who should explain all his wishes.

So bowing, and receding backwards as they bowed, they managed to retreat into a friendly avenue, and then turning, pursued their way toward the palace, in high glee at the unexpected happy termination of their second interview with the King.

They had scarcely ended their midday meal, when a page, entering their apartment, delivered the commands of the Queen, that Master Hewet should attend her pleasure in her own chamber; and another message from Thomas Cromwell, that Henry Horton should forthwith repair to his private apartments, and be honoured by an interview with that great favourite of fortune, as he then appeared to be, and learn, through him, the pleasure of the King.

Horton followed the page; and, as he had to remain some time in the anti-room, he could not resist a feeling of disgust, at witnessing the cringing servility of lords and nobles, churchmen, and men high in the law, to all those who assumed the power, for few really possessed it, of opening, or keeping closed to them, the door to the audience chamber of this second most powerful man in the whole realm.

Thomas Cromwell was, as the reader already knows, the son of Walter Cromwell, now a brewer, formerly a blacksmith, at Putney, and had raised himself, by his own talents, to the exalted pitch he had now attained. When a lad, he had run away from home; was afterwards a clerk in an English factory at Antwerp; then entered the army, under Prince Charles, Duke of Bourbon, and, it is said, was at the sacking of Rome, in 1527. After acting as a trooper in the Italian wars, he once more resumed the character of a mercantile man in Venice, then returning to England, took to the study of the law, was appointed solicitor to the great Cardinal Wolsey, after whose fall, he solicited an audience of the King, and proposed such bold steps of defiance towards the Pope, who still refused to sanction the divorce of the King from Catherine, and his union with his then beloved Anne Boleyn, that Henry at once took him into his confidence, made him one of his council, the

head of which he very soon became, and next to the King himself, swayed the whole power of the realm.

Henry, from being one of the richest monarchs in the world, which he was at his accession, had been so prodigal with his wealth, that he now found himself at times very straitened in his means; but here again the boundless resources of Cromwell's mind in discovering expedients once more shone forth. He had been the instrument of severing for ever the power of Rome from this land; he now was busily maturing a scheme which for greatness of conception, and we may add, villany, had perhaps never been equalled, we mean the total suppression of the monasteries and religious houses all over the kingdom. This determination was not yet fully promulgated; the people were not at this early season of the coming Reformation, prepared for such a violent change from all the old habits of slavish veneration for everything held up as sacred by their pastors.

It was therefore necessary, in the first instance, to undermine the powers these pastors possessed over the minds of their devotees, by proving the vicious lives they led, to lay bare to the world the ingenious machinery by which they worked their miracles, and indeed, to bring into contempt all that had hitherto been most revered.

Fortunately for the success of Cromwell's newly-formed scheme, and unfortunately in an equal degree, for those against whom he was about to wage war, the whole fabric of the church in England, had from ages of corruption, descended to such a depth of degradation, that the difficulty did not lie in finding ample specimens of the rottenness of the system, but, amongst so many weeds of noxious growth, the labour was to discover the virtuous exceptions. Doubtless there were many, and many; but it was impossible to sift the good seeds from the chaff, as when a limb, by mortifying, must suffer amputation, to preserve the rest of the body, a portion of the wholesome flesh invariably dies with it, the exact line of demarcation between the healthy and the diseased portions is impossible to hit.

Had Henry been as rich now as he had found himself upon coming to the throne, this great war against the monasteries had, perhaps, never taken place, at least in his reign; but his necessities made him listen with a greedy ear to any plan which was likely to replenish his exhausted coffers; and what could do this half so effectually as, at once, seizing upon the enormous wealth, in lands, and gold, and jewels, possessed by the overgrown, overbearing, monastic powers? As an instance of the wealth of religious houses, it is said that at one time the Templars alone possessed no less than sixteen thousand manors.

To bring about the degradation of the monks, the friars, and general priesthood, Cromwell required agents, who knew no virtue but that of obedience to his will. It was on this account he had fixed upon Horton as a fitting tool, for he had spies in all directions, to find out who and what men were.

Presently the gentleman in waiting called the name of Master Henry Horton. Horton, who felt that now or never was his chance, arose from the seat on which he had been resting, and from which he had been studying another chapter in the book of human nature; but it was an

easy chapter, and required as little coming then, as it does at this day. The whole interest of that chapter, might be summed up in one word, SELF! He had learnt it now by heart, so entered the audience-chamber of the great Thomas Cromwell, armed at every point to gain the prize he coveted—advancement.

The room into which he was ushered was small, and displayed no great magnificence of appointments. Cromwell was seated, writing; he did not condescend to raise his head, nor did he cease from his occupation, but as he wrote, he said—"Your name is Horton, Henry Horton—you knew a man they called the Blear-eyed Bully?"

Horton, more than once in his life, which was, it must be owned, but yet a short one, had been surprised at what he had heard; but to say that he was now *surprised*, would be to use a term of unmeaning weakness—he was paralyzed! Could he have commanded the invention of inspiration, to have combined a certain number of words as the most unlikely salutation that could have met his ear upon the present occasion, it would have been the one now uttered by the King's great favourite.

Horton, having hesitated for a moment or two, was about to offer something after the fashion of an excuse for his unfortunate knowledge of such a character; but he was interrupted by Cromwell, saying—"I require no answer; I merely put the question to show Henry Horton that I *know* him. Possessing, as he now is aware I do, his real character, he has merely to say—will he serve the King's Highness, or will he not?"

Horton, upon whom the few words uttered by Cromwell had all the effect intended, felt that to beat about the bush with such a man was to lose the game altogether, answered boldly—"With heart, and body, and soul!" and then stood, silently awaiting his new patron's pleasure to speak.

Cromwell now, for the first time, raised his eyes towards the youth, and, by the expression of his own countenance, read something in that of the other, which pleased him much.

"Be seated," said Cromwell; then looking him full in the face, he continued—"You know something of ecclesiastical life, though a mere clothworker's apprentice—do you not?"

"I do," was Horton's answer; "and more than I should say was holy."

"Who taught you? the saintly father Brassinjaw, of St. Thomas's chapel, on the Bridge—ay?"

"He has taught me somewhat of priestly rogueseries; but my own observation has taught me more."

"Then you think, young as you are, you could detect a flaw, if there were one, in the lives of either abbot, or monk, or even in that of a pretty nun?"

"In the last I'm sure I could," he said, smiling.

"You see, young sir, that the whole world has become so wicked, that now there is even an outcry against those to whom we have hitherto always looked for examples of virtue and of piety. Now, to save the King's realms from utter ruin, and the wrath of Heaven, it has become incumbent upon us, who are the humble instruments by which either

the weal or woe of this great kingdom is to be brought about, to institute such rigorous investigations, that the guilty shall not escape, nor shall the innocent be made to suffer for others' crimes. A commission is about to be issued, to examine into the lives and habits of every member of the religious houses that now are covering and devouring the land. It is upon that commission you will be employed; your duty is to find out vices; from what I have heard, I imagine you know the meaning of the word, so that there needs no further explanation. You will receive an order upon the King's treasurer for your proper appointments; be vigilant, and remember that it is vice, and only vice, that you are to ferret out wherever you are commanded to appear. Take this dispatch to my house in Throgmorton Street, and there await further instructions. I will make all arrangements with your former master. You are now in the service of Thomas Cromwell."

Horton took the dispatch, and bowing profoundly, left the presence chamber.

A groom was already in waiting to conduct him to the various offices he had to pass through; and, without having seen master Hewet, he soon found himself mounted on one of the King's horses, hurrying towards London.

Had the whole bagfull of Fortune's chances been sorted out, and had Horton been allowed to choose his own, he could not have fixed upon one more after his inmost heart than the appointment he had thus unexpectedly received. He was quite old enough in iniquity to comprehend the full extent to which he was expected to go, when the commission should once be set in motion. He was to find out errors in the priesthood, and if he could not find them, he was to make them; that he clearly saw, and fully adequate he felt himself to be to carry out the grand intentions of his employers. When he arrived in London, which he did in an incredibly short space of time, for his impatience would not allow him to loiter upon the road, the first person he went to was his late master's tailor, for he thought that would be as likely a way as any to spread the report of his advancement; and, besides, he felt that the blue and white livery of the apprentice was but ill-becoming to one of the King's Highness's commissioners, which he knew he was soon to be. He stopped at a small tailor's shop near Aldgate. Within, upon a work-board, were seated an old man and a lanky, mild-faced boy. The old man had spectacles upon his nose, and was, at the moment Horton stopped, admonishing his son for neglect of duty, by being ever employed in reading, when he should be working. "But I'm not, father," said the boy, "indeed I'm not; I do more work in the day, than any journeyman I know."

"But that only proves," said the old man, "how much more you might do, but for those stupid books. I'm of the same opinion with that good creature, Father Brassinjaw, who says he has little doubt of printing having been the invention of the devil, in order to injure the Pope, and all his loving subjects."

"Talking of the Pope," said the boy, "puts me in mind of the Pope's head on Cornhill. I can't discover anywhere what that house could have been; it must have pertained in olden time, to some great estate,

or rather to the King of this realm, as may be inferred both from the largeness thereof, and by the arms, to wit, three leopards passant, gardant, which were the whole arms of England, before the reign of Edward the III. that quartered them with the arms of France, three fleur-de-lis——”

“Boy, boy, you drive me mad,” exclaimed the old tailor; “one can never mention a single word, but it calls forth your nonsense about some old place in London. There, you’ve got a book under your legs now.”

“I know I have, father; for when I am winding thread, or doing anything that does not require my eyes, I always read between my legs, and I’m sure that can do no harm to any one.”

And who was this boy? It was one who was laying the foundation of an unostentatious immortality; it was the kind-hearted, simple-minded, industrious John Stow—the beloved of all the later historians of our land, the indefatigable searcher after truth, the “Old,” the “Venerable Stow.” So accustomed are we to hear one of those epithets pronounced in conjunction with the name of Stow, that it seems to us of the present day next to impossible, that “Old Stow” could ever have been “young Stow;” but after what we have said, we do expect that even antiquarians, and they are not people to be easily drawn from an opinion, will believe, with us, that he was once *actually a boy!*

“Come here,” said Horton, in an authoritative tone, “and hold my horse; do you hear?”

Young Stow looked up, as did the old man from over his spectacles and both evinced great astonishment at seeing the apprentice, Harry Horton, alighting from a superb horse. Young Stow ran out to hold the bridle, and Horton entered the tailor’s dwelling.

“Why, master Harry,” said the old man, “what want ye, lad? Doth thy slops still cut thee at the knee? or does your master require my attendance?”

“What master?” enquired Horton, as a sort of leading question, to enable him to touch upon the change in his condition.

“Why, marry, good Master Hewet; what other master wouldst thou have?”

“Hewet, bah! he may do full well to commune with, for dyers, or weavers, or botchers like thyself, but not for us of the King’s service.”

“Art thou mad, boy?” said the tailor, laughing heartily; “what means the lad?”

“It means, that if you would hold my custom, you must hold a more beseeching tongue; and that you may do so, know that the favourite Cromwell is now my patron. Out with thy measures, and thy pattern book, for I have no time to waste with prick-louse knaves.”

“Then hie thee to thy patron’s tailor, puffed up frog!” said the man of thread and patches, with wounded pride, for prick-louse knave was the most degrading epithet that could be then applied to any one of his calling; “I want none of your custom; fools are ever fortune’s favourites, so thou’lt be rich, depend on’t; thou’lt be rich, depend on’t! And if that rogue, Cromwell, be thy patron, tell him from me, he’ll have none of

my garden, either for love or money." Saying which, the old tailor, boiling with rage, returned to his shop-board, and set to work with a vigour, that made him break his thread at every other stitch.

Horton, with enormous dignity, mounted his horse, and pursued his way towards his patron's dwelling, as young John Stow turned his mind in the same direction, and immediately began to study the History of Throgmorton-street.

The injustice which arose from this interview between Horton and the elder Stow—for we cannot bring our pen to commit the sacrilege of calling any but one, "Old Stow," the "Venerable Stow" afterwards recorded in his Survey of London, and of which, we may by and by, have occasion to speak.

CHAPTER IX.

The mother was an elf by adventure
Ycome, by charmes or by sorcery.—CHAUCER.

THERE always appears to be, amongst the wonderful ingredients of which a human mind is composed, one little seed, or germ of superstition, which requires only to be watered by the cold dewdrops that fall from the brow of fear, fanned by the breath of falsehood, and then warmed by the heat of imagination, to grow, to bud, to bloom, and in its turn bear seed, to propagate its kind in other minds. Ignorance is now well known to be its native soil, and there it flourishes to an extent, almost miraculous in its power. By superstition, the giant becomes a child; the poor weak maid, whose trembling eyelids scarcely dared to rise, fearing to meet an unkind look, rushes undaunted to the field of blood, and with her single arm, makes armies fly before her!

Again it rises in another form, and takes the deepest root in minds that think themselves religious; it is here its fruit is bitterest, bloodiest, and its branches spread the farthest. To this fell tree, we owe our own dread word, assassin. The Assassins were a religious eastern sect, who wandered secretly about the earth, to murder all their misthought holy chief denounced, their superstitious minds being taught that such vile acts were passports sure to heaven. It is to superstition we owe millions of cold-blooded murders by fire, and sword—by tortures, whose mere relation makes our own flesh creep upon our bones. How many a poor old wretch has been torn limb from limb, amidst the laughter of a mocking crowd, because some ignorant superstitious fool, who dared profane the livery of HIM who preached but *MERCY, PITY, and FORGIVENESS*, pronounced her *WITCH*!

Education has done much to eradicate from our soil this noxious weed. But superstition is like a cancer, you may cut off the main body, you may tear it out, as you believe, by the very roots, but still there will remain some shred, some fibre, that if but nurtured, would again spring forth in all its old deformity. In witness of its tenacity in the human mind, do we not see even in these, supposed to be enlightened days,

men who never pass beneath a scaffold ; others, who spilling the salt, cast a portion over their left shoulder ; a third class believe they must be unfortunate for seven years, if they should break a lookingglass ; or who will dare place two knives across ? Cromwell, not the Cromwell of our tale, but his great grandson—the truly mighty Oliver, is supposed to have believed in *lucky days* ; Napoleon, the second Oliver Cromwell, is said to have ever avoided commencing any great work on a Friday !

We have entered into this slight dissertation upon superstition, from an amiable feeling towards our hero, Edward Osborne, fearing that the apparent tendency to superstition in his mind, might lower him in the estimation of our readers ; but when we remember that he lived in one of the most superstitious eras in English History, we may surely forgive him for possessing the same dread of supernatural powers, and of witchcraft, that haunted the minds of the then most learned and enlightened of our land.

Osborne, be it remembered, had seen the ghost, or believed he had done so, of a man, whom he had witnessed commit two murders ! He had known that man to be executed, principally by his agency, in a manner the most lingering and appalling ; and in his hand, he then beheld an invitation, written in blood, to attend some unholy rite, that should reveal to him his own future fate. Osborne was no coward ; nor was King Henry, although he trembled at the prophecies of the monkly-instigated impostor, the “ Holy Maid of Kent ;” but still it must be confessed, that Edward, as the hour drew nigh for his promised journey to the hut of the Witch of the Marsh, felt his heart, in a slight degree, fail him. “ Was he again to meet the dead ? ”

There is something so dreadful in the thought, that we readily forgive the shudder that ran through his every nerve, as he asked himself the question. We have often thought, and are doing so now, literally at the “ *midnight hour*,” for the clock of the same old church of St. Luke, which witnessed Osborne’s saving the life of the drowning boy off Chelsea, is now sounding in our ear—yes, we have often thought what would be the real effect on the human mind, did a *real ghost* stalk into our room—not a vague shadow, an undefined something, we knew not what, which might by argument be accounted of, but one of which there could be no doubt. The more we reflect, the more certain we are that were a ghost really to appear, the sight would blast the mind—every feeling of nature would be frozen up, perhaps in death ; or if a thaw should come again, it would leave the brain one mass of madness. No, no ; no man that lived to tell it, has ever seen a ghost !

The *doubt* of the possibility that such a thing could be, gave Osborne courage sufficient to make him fulfil his promise made to the Cripple.

As the evening approached, Osborne was lost in an ocean of perplexities. His master and Horton being away, he felt himself more than ever responsible. The men employed in the merchant’s business being gone, and the shop shut up, he found himself alone in the house with Flora Gray. Where could his mistress be ? she had left home in the morning, as usual, to take her riding-lesson with Sir Filbut Fussy, but had not yet returned.

Such a circumstance had never occurred before, and Flora became un-

easy, and began to foretell all sorts of misfortunes. Perhaps her mistress had been thrown from her horse—perhaps killed; but then, unless Sir Filbut had been killed with her, he would certainly have brought home the body, or at least come to tell of the event. Another cause of perplexity took rise in the strange circumstance, that about midday a woman had called with a message from Dame Hewet, that Flora was to go upon some trifling errand, to a distant part of the city, and that this woman was to take the child with her to her mother, who, she said, was going some little distance into the country, and wished to give Anne a treat. The woman who came was so fair spoken, and of such a kindly, motherly style of person, that no suspicion arising in the mind of Flora, the child was sent, and she herself went upon the errand for her mistress, but failed to find the place she had been directed to.

Osborne, whose mind was full of his own projects, paid much less attention to Flora's alarm than he otherwise would have done; and, indeed, he felt rather glad that his mistress was from home, as it saved him the necessity of inventing an excuse for quitting the house so late in the evening; when he did so, he did it with reluctance, not because he so much dreaded the business he was going upon, but that he felt it unkind to leave poor *Flora Gray* in the place alone, now she had pictured to her mind all sorts of coming horrors. It certainly was strange that his mistress should not have returned long ere that late hour; but still a few minutes, no doubt, would see her and her dear child, the little Anne; so leaving Flora gossiping with Alice Vaughan, the lantern maker's pretty daughter opposite, he placed his flat cap upon his head, and arming himself with his apprentice-club, sallied forth, under the fearful anticipation, that he was about to learn something strange, if not of dire import to his future fate.

There is in the breast of every human being, a longing desire to look into futurity—a lingering hope that there might be found some strange good fortune stored up for them in the womb of time; but it seldom occurs to any, that perchance appalling misfortunes might there be found instead. There are few living, who have not, in one way or another, endeavoured to cheat the future out of its secrets, some by the stars, some by the cards; the palm of the hand too, is a favourite book of fate; and some even now fancy, that whole lives may be found written upon the sybilline leaves in the bottom of a cup. If such follies still find votaries in this, our age, Edward Osborne may surely be excused for pursuing the phantom of prophecy, living as he did at a time, when to have denied witchcraft, would have been regarded next to insanity.

There was one thing connected with fortune-telling which struck him as very odd, and that was, why did nature always pick out the most contemptible and ignorant of human beings, to be the repositories of her hidden secrets? But still he had heard so many strange fulfilments of old women's prophecies, that, although he could not prevent a rising doubt occasionally obtruding itself upon his mind, yet he thought it quite *possible* that the mother of the Bridge-shooter might be a real witch, notwithstanding her son's denial of the fact. He had himself been subjected to a visitation of so awful a nature, which to account for

by any other means than those of supernatural agency, he found himself totally unable.

The evening which had commenced in beauty, was changing, as the hand of night began to close the curtains of the day ; the wind which had hitherto been sighing, and softly kissing the roses that lay in Flora's lap, came now in angry gusts of sudden violence, then as suddenly died away ; lurid clouds, sailing for the south, were covering up the heavens, and Osborne fancied that more than once, he heard a murmuring, like the whispered voice of distant thunder ; the few boats he met seemed to be hurrying homewards to escape the threatened hurricane ; not a star was to be seen, and the whole sky was now become one dark mass of storm-fraught clouds.

This unexpected change in the weather, added not a little to the unpleasant feelings which were rapidly taking possession of his mind ; not a scene of horror that had lately passed, but now arose once more before his imagination with all the vivid colouring of a dream. Just as he was passing the very spot where the murder had been committed, the whole artillery of heaven burst over his head in one appalling clap of thunder, that made him pause aghast, paralyzed by the awfulness of the sound ; sheets of fire illumined the entire skies ; peals of thunder came in rapid succession ; then the clouds transforming themselves into a deluge, fell in torrents upon the earth. Every nerve was exerted by Osborne to carry his skiff quickly to the shore, but the winds were fierce against him, and more than once had nearly precipitated him headlong into the angry flood. At last he succeeded in driving his boat upon the shore, then jumping out he dragged it as far up as his unaided strength would permit him out of the dangerous influence of the stream. He secured it to a pole that stood near, and which he found, by the aid of the sheets of lightning that flickered for seconds together over the desolate marshes, and having done so, was about to bend his steps towards the hut, whose fire-lighted window pointed out the direction in which it lay, when, turning once more to assure himself that the boat was well secured, he raised his eyes, and stood aghast at finding he had fastened it to the shaft of a gibbet, from the arm of which hung down an iron cradle, upon whose ribs the lightning played so incessantly, that he plainly saw within it a human head, and as it swung towards him in the howling wind, he recognised the dreaded features of the Bully. It now recurred to his memory, that the Cripple had told him it was that morning to be placed up the marshes, as a warning to other evil doers. He hurried away, and was soon tapping at the witch's door.

"Come in, Edward Osborne," the old witch inside was heard to say ; and at the same moment, the latch flew up with a sharp clink, and the door stood open. How it came so, he was at a loss to guess, for the old woman was seated at some distance off, watching a pot that was hanging by a long hook over the fire, and had her back turned towards the door. Her knowledge, too, of whom it was that had sought her hut, at such an unlikely hour, puzzled him a good deal, but it well prepared his mind to believe in her supernatural gifts. "Why have you loitered thus ? The death-watch has ticked the tenth hour long ago ; and think you that fate will tarry to suit the slothfulness of mortals ?"

Edward closed the door, for the storm was still raging ; then advancing towards the fire, he was struck by the painful expression of the old woman's face—the hand of fear seemed to have seized upon her whole frame, for she trembled in every limb—even the words she had already spoken had come falteringly from her tongue.

"Are you ill, good mother?" inquired Edward, kindly; "has my unexpected appearance terrified you?"

"*Thy* appearance terrified *me*! *Thy* appearance unexpected! No, no! But I have cause for trembling, ample cause: we ask not questions of the white lips of death, without our own becoming blanched as well—we ask not the voice of the grave to speak to us, with its earthy breath, without our own breath faltering in its unhallowed task."

Here she took up a dead toad, and dropping it into the boiling pot, stirred it about, as her shrivelled lips appeared to be muttering some mystic charm.

Osborne's nerves were now so completely unstrung, that he had no longer power to reason upon what he saw or heard, but seemed to feel that he had unwisely placed himself entirely within the power of the beings of another world; he tried to offer up a prayer, but his memory flew away affrighted, and all he could do, was to repeating again and again a parcel of unconnected words.

After a determined effort to subdue his nervous fear, he said—"Good mother, let me at once tell you my errand here, and then——"

"You may save your breath," said the old woman, interrupting him, "save your breath, for you may want it ere another hour be past; for, see, the toad sinks to the bottom—an evil sign, an evil sign! Besides, your errand is far better known to me than to thyself. Think you, that if I have the power of satisfying your longing to look into the glass of fate, that I should lack the power of knowing what impelled your curiosity? No, no! all is known to me—all is known to me! The charm is nearly wrought; when 'tis fully done, then ask me what you will, and I will answer." Here she once more stirred round the boiling pot, and once more her lips moved, as muttering a charm. "'Tis done!" she said; then suddenly rising, placed a stick through the handle of the pot, and holding one end, she motioned to Edward to take the other, and thus between them they lifted the boiling cauldron off the hook by which it hung, and carried it towards the side of a wretched bed, which stood in a recess at the further end of the room. The flickering light of the fire alone illumed the miserable hovel, and threw deep shades from every thing that intercepted its uncertain rays.

Osborne started at seeing a figure moving near him—it was his own shadow on the wall. He blushed at his cowardice, and in a resolute tone expressed his impatience to learn his fate, be it good or evil.

"Thou wilt know it too soon, I fear. But take this egg, and from thine own height drop it into the boiling water—it will tell thy death."

Osborne would have rather learnt some more agreeable part of his destiny first, for it seemed to his mind unnatural to begin with the end; but being anxious now to bring his interview with the witch of the marsh as speedily as he could to a termination, he did all he had been

commanded, when the old woman, advancing with a firebrand in her hand, desired Osborne, by its aid, to look into the cauldron.

He did so, but started back, for the whole water had become the colour of blood.—“What means this change?” said Edward, in a faltering voice.

“That thy death will be a bloody one; and as the egg which held thy doom has burst so soon, it will be as speedy as ‘tis bloody!”

If Osborne did now feel his veins run chilly cold, and an icy sensation fixing upon his heart, there could be but little wonder: he feared to believe her words, yet longed to prove their truth or falsity. If true, he knew he could not avoid his fate—if false, the sooner his mind were relieved the better; so he said—“Witch, or fiend, or devil—be you one or all, I’ll put your soothsaying to the proof, or I will swear away your life, and have you burnt in Smithfield, for the witch you pretend to be! The cause of my coming here was a command from the dead: if you possess, in truth, your vaunted power, call up again the vision that haunted me in the midnight chapel!”

“And would you dare to look upon that form again?” said the old woman, trembling.

“I would,” replied Osborne, “and from his dead lips learn the truth or falsity of your prediction.”

“Be warned in time!” the old woman exclaimed.

“Impostor! trifle no more!” Osborne said, savagely.

“Then thus of thy blood I wash my hands.” As she uttered these words, she moved her hands about, one over the other, as if in the act of washing them, and then continued—“Take that burning brand in thy right hand, and with thy left remove the coverlid from off yonder bed.”

She had pronounced this sentence with such evident self-belief in her own powers, that Osborne hesitated for a moment to fulfil her injunctions; but sneering at his own credulity, he seized the brand, and tearing the tattered clothes from off the bed, stood transfixed with horror, for there he saw the body of the Blear-eyed Bully, lying as though he had been again in life.

“Wilt thou ask thy fate of *him*?” demanded the old woman, in a voice trembling with emotion.

“No, no—I dare not!” Osborne replied, as he fell sinking to the earth.

“Then learn it unasked!” exclaimed a voice of thunder. The figure rose up suddenly, and in another instant Osborne found himself within the iron grasp of a giant. Two men, or fiends, he knew not which, rushed from behind the bed, and before he had the power to collect a single thought, they bound him hand and foot, and he was powerless; the old woman had fallen dead or senseless upon the ground.

So suddenly had all the latter portion of this strange scene occurred, that Edward fancied he must be in a dream; but he was soon made sensible of the reality of his awful position.

“Fool!” said the ghost, for such Osborne still found it difficult to persuade himself it was not; “and did a boy like you dream of playing with the lives of men, and think that none were living to avenge the

dead? I am the twin-brother of him you brought to death; and I am his twin in mind as well as in form and feature. When I learnt that it was to you and to your master the payment for his death was due, I formed my plans. I had, at first, intended to have followed you wherever you went, in these habiliments in which my other self perished—to have dogged your steps at every turn, and by making your life a hell on earth, by the supposition that a dead man was ever lying in your path, have driven you by torturing degrees to hopeless madness: for your master, I had other schemes—but my plans are changed. It is now my intention to bind you face to face to the head that at this moment swings in the night-breeze from the gibbet by the water's edge, and there let you hang by the neck till you are dead."

"Monster!" exclaimed Edward, "you will not dare to put your horrid threat into execution; and if you would, these men, if men they be, cannot stand by and see so bloody a crime committed."

"Ha, ha, poor boy!" the other replied; "open your eyes and gaze upon them well; you have met before—the murderers of the weaver; those who assisted then are not the most likely to withhold a helping hand in such a trifle as a baby's death. Come, away with him! Don't be afraid that you shall die too soon; 'give and take' is our maxim. You provided a lingering death for my brother—his brother shall find a lingering one for you. You shall suffer drowning a dozen times before we hang you up to die."

The other two wretches now hurried with Osborne borne between them, struggling with all the might his bound limbs could muster; he screamed out murder with all the strength despair could bring him, but his cries were only answered by the mocking wind and laughter of those who had him so completely in their power. They threw him into the water; he struggled hard, but they held him down until they believed him nearly dead; then drew him forth, and laid him on the ground until he should recover consciousness sufficient to endure a second death. They all sat down beneath the gibbet to watch him. The storm of thunder and lightning had passed away; the wind still howled as loudly as ever, but its violence broke up the clouds into large masses, which rolling away in awful grandeur, let in the moonlight, which, for the time, rendered all around as clear as day. "Do you hear him breathe?" said the brother of the Bully; to which the other answered, "Who can hear anything, with such a bellowing wind as this? I wish you'd let us hang him up at once, for see, he moves."

"Well, do as you like," said the first speaker, "he will make a pretty example, and a glorious warning to other meddling apprentices, when he is found hanging here in the morning. Oh! it's turned desperately cold," he added, as he seemed to be seized with a fit of ague; "the sooner the work be ended, the better, for I must get something to warm me now. Slip this noose over his neck, and let us haul him up at once." As he said this, he rose up, and threw an end of a rope over the arm of the gibbet, as the other men were fixing the noose round the neck of the affrighted Osborne, who had recovered full consciousness of his dreadful situation. He gave all the resistance his helpless state would allow, and endeavoured again to scream aloud.

The bank on which he lay was very steep ; just as they had succeeded in fixing the rope about his neck, he drew his knees up almost to his chin, then, with a despairing effort, sent out his legs so suddenly, that one of his murderers was cast headlong down the bank into the water ; the other two rushed to his rescue, but the tide was so strongly running round the projecting point of the land, that it carried him out of his depth. Not being able to swim, he called aloud for help. •

“Run and untie the boat,” said the principal of the wretches ; the other hastened to the gibbet and did as he was told, while the Bleary-eyed Bully’s twin-brother, jumping into the boat, pushed off to the rescue of his companion. He had scarcely accomplished the task, when the man at the gibbet ran frantically to the water’s edge, and madly called upon them to return, and take him aboard the boat. As the boat touched the shore, and the man placed his foot upon it, a loud shout of voices was heard near at hand. “Away, away,” he said, “or we are lost ! See yonder crowd running hither ; pull for your lives, pull, pull !” The boat in which the murderous wretches now found means to escape, was the one Osborne had come in.

Who can paint the revulsion of feelings which at this moment nearly overpowered the poor youth ! Despair, rushing so suddenly from his bursting heart, found vent in a violent flood of tears ; death seemed flying before his eyes, chased by a new-born life. The crowd that now came running and shouting toward him was composed principally of peasants, some armed with sticks, spades, and brooms, and others with pitchforks, upon the points of which they had hung lanterns, to hold high up in the air, as signals that aid was approaching. What was Osborne’s astonishment to observe that the throng was headed by the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower, who bounded over the earth like a swift mountaineer, aided by his long staff. Another surprise was to observe the peasants carrying the witch upon their shoulders, and at the same moment to find his bonds being loosened by his faithful, humble friend, Billy-the-Bridge-Shooter ! The moment Edward found himself free, he fell upon his knees and thanked his God ; then he jumped up, and danced, and cried, and laughed, and kept hugging every body who came within his reach ; then he sank once again upon the earth, and burst into a more violent fit of tears than ever. Numbers lined the edge of the water, and shouted execrations towards the wretches in the fast-receding boat. Osborne was soon conveyed back again to the hut ; dry clothes were put on him, which were speedily collected, part from one, part from another, of the bystanders, so that, as he sat by the replenished fire, he looked anything but the comely lad he really was. The old woman, too, was paid great attention to by the peasants, who really did believe her to be a witch, for, as they said, “who was it gave them such good crops, if it was not her charms ?”

An explanation of the means of Osborne’s almost miraculous delivery was soon entered upon, by which it appeared that the Cripple of the Bridge, who had himself too much to do with the dead to give credence to the possibility of the grave ever again giving up its prey to walk the earth as unmeaning ghosts, imagined that some trick, but not of a serious nature, was to be played off upon Edward, for the sake of

frightening him, and nothing more; but not admiring these practical jokes, it was his intention to be present at the game, and if it turned out as he expected, namely, that a parcel of apprentice boys were to be the actors, he would frighten them in turn, and lay his staff soundly about their shoulders. For this purpose, he had gone to the marshes some-time before Osborne was to arrive there: the night became tempestuous, so much so, that he gave up all idea of Edward's coming; he sheltered himself in a little out-house, or shed near the hut. At last he saw, by the lightning's aid, Osborne at the door of the hovel. When he had gone in, the Cripple took his station at the casement, to which there was no shelter, and through which he saw all that passed.

He said—"He must own he had become intensely interested by the scene, up to the bursting forth of the three ruffians, when his wonder changed to alarm for Edward's safety: he knew that his own single power was of no avail, so that when the murderers were dragging Edward from the hut, he hurried away to seek for aid: not knowing the marshes, he lost himself amongst the ditches and dikes; and then to his horror, found himself again near the hut; but this was the saving of the youth's life, for here he met the old woman, with feeble steps, trying to hurry away for aid; she pointed out the only road to the neighbouring village, to which, with long jumps he took with his trusty staff; he soon arrived, and was immediately on his return with the whole village at his heels."

It appeared, by the old woman's account, that three ruffians had come to her hut, and after beating and torturing her, they swore they would drag out her tongue, roast it, and make her eat it; they would then tear out her eyes; and last of all, they would set her upon her own fire, and burn her to death, if she did not do all they commanded. They placed themselves in such positions, that not only could they hear every word she said, but also see, whether by look or sign, she should attempt to give Osborne the least warning of his dreadful fate. She said the dead toad and the egg, that seemed to change the water to blood, were brought by one of the men, whom she guessed, from what fell from their lips, to be one of the conjurors who attended the fairs, and cheated the poor people out of their pence.

"Vell, mother," said Billy-the-bridge-shooter, "I do hope now you vill give up your darling vitchcraft; you vosn't made for a vitch, you vosn't; upon my life you vosn't; and you never can be a vitch as long as you lives!"

The poor old woman hung down her head, and seemed to be thinking that her son was, very likely, not far from right, but said nothing.

Edward Osborne's clothes being now thoroughly dried, and he, finding himself wonderfully invigorated by a famous supper, which had been provided by the Bridge-shooter, who, having found himself possessed of a fortune, as he called it, namely, a few shillings, received for his attendance at the loading of the vessels belonging to merchant Hewet, had, upon arriving in town, spent the greater part in food and comforts for his old mother, and it was to bring them to her,

that he had so opportunely arrived. Osborne determined to hurry home, late as it was.

The Bridge-shooter insisted upon his mother removing at once into the neighbouring village; "for he was not going to have her murdered there, to please her, or anybody else." She did not object much, for she began to dread another visit from her three friends of that night, who had made anything but a favourable impression on her mind.

In those days, the furniture in most houses, was of no great extent; use was more studied then, than ornament. Our forefather's feet were well satisfied to tread upon the plain boards; or, if a little gentility must be assumed, a few rushes answered all the purposes of a modern velvet-piled carpet; and as for linen, we may presume there was no great stock kept, that commodity being generally manufactured upon the premises, excepting the finer sorts, and those were imported from abroad, which made them rather too costly to be in common use. If the general run of furniture was thus simple in really decent dwellings, it will not be surprising that, but a few minutes sufficed for the packing of the whole household stuffs belonging to the witch of the marsh.

Each of the party carrying a portion, they were soon ready 'to run away by the light of the moon,' which they speedily did.

The Bridge-shooter carried the old bedstead and bedding and all, which was no very heavy load, the old woman, the Cripple, and Edward, managed the rest, and thus they trudged along towards the village. They had not proceeded many hundred yards, before the old woman started so suddenly, that the whole party had nearly let all the things fall in alarm.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "where is my spirit—where is my spirit? I'll not go without my spirit."

"Vot, you're at your vitchery again, mother, are you?" said her son.

The old woman made no answer, but was at once turning back, when she was arrested by her "spirit" crying "mew, mew!" It turned out to be a large old black cat, that had followed them from the hut, and which the old woman sincerely believed was a spirit that could tell her all the wonders of the hidden world, although it must be confessed it had never told her anything yet, and perhaps never would. The ancient dame took up the old cat, who purring, nestled in her bosom, and on again the party trudged. The old woman was comfortably lodged in the village, and the other three started off towards Old London Bridge.

As they journeyed along, the conversation naturally turned upon the recent occurrences, and Billy-the-bridge-shooter began to moralize upon the old adage, of "a man that is born to be hanged, will never be drowned." "That's uncommon true," said he; "but then the rascals vouted to leave you not no choice at all, for they would have hanged and drowned you too, if they could. Now to-night has proved to me, that there is a third chance left for us all—and that is—ven a man is born to die in his bed, he'll never be hanged nor drowned neither."

"Why, friend," said the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, "you're quite a philosopher."

"So mother says," replied the lad, "she often calls me a philisossifer; and vy do you think she calls me by that rum name? Vy, because I

sometimes speaks a little bit of truth!—vot nonsense, isn't it? Vy, if it only vouted to tell truths to be one on 'em, I vunders all the vurld are not philisossifers."

"Because," replied the Cripple, "the greater part of the world finds it a difficult task to speak the truth."

"I think," said the Bridge-shooter, "it's a precious deal more difficulter to tell lies. I finds it so, I know. Vy, truth slips out so smooth and easy; vun never has to think about that; but ven you've got to tell a lie, my viskers! haven't you got to think of a lot of other things as vell, only to keep you from being found out."

Edward Osborne, who had been too deeply engaged with his own thoughts, upon the strange web of fate that seemed to be gathering around him, to pay much attention to the philosophical disputation between the Bridge-shooter and the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, now interrupted their discourse, by observing—"It is evident, too evident, that I have at last made an enemy, who will in all likelihood pursue me through life to my ruin, or to my death; for this bold, this fiend-like attack upon me to-night, shews that he who planned it, is as unrelenting as he his ferocious. And my good master, too, it appears, is to be persecuted as well; and why? because we were the cause of bringing a murderer to justice."

"If that's it," said the Bridge-shooter, "I had better look out myself, for I think I had a little bit of a hand in that affair; for in diving to the bottom of the Thames, I happened, by good luck, to dive to the very bottom of all the mystery, and brought the dead weaver and the truth to light at the same time. Now, Villy," he continued, addressing the Cripple, "vot is your advice in this matter? vot course think you will be the best, I mean the safest for us all? If ve make a stir about to-night's business, ve shall get the whole of Alsatia, and the Clink into the bargain, about our ears; the pretty lads in them quarters are no boys to mince matters, or be behind hand with you, unless in the hand behind they hold a knife; I know 'em vell. I think, as Master Edward is safe now, the less we says about the business the better. 'A silent tongue makes a vise head,' as an old rip that I knows always says, ven he don't vont you to tell of his rogueries."

"For the present," replied the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, "you are right. It is only a fool who lets the spring go, until he is sure the rat is in the trap. Besides, there are more wheels at work, than those we see; by letting this one turn on, and watching carefully, we may find a way of stopping the whole at once."

"How strangely," said Osborne, "does man's life at times suddenly vary, and upon such mere chances too. Until these last few weeks, I was a simple plodding apprentice, with not a care to trouble me—not a change from day to day, from week to week—nay, months and years were all the same to me, one unvarying round of monotonous existence, when all at once, I find myself in the centre of a whirlpool of dangers. There is one thing I have never yet been able to account for, and it has caused me many and many a weary hour of thought, of anxious conjecture—that is, the mystery which has always surrounded the circumstance of my good master being warned of the danger, which we now know was

no groundless fancy, that threatened me when he sent me to Putney, and kept me there secluded until the eve of the trial of the robber Miles."

"Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he——!" screeched the Cripple; "how simple do mighty things appear, when the veil of mystery be removed; and yet it seemed like fate that sent the chance to me."

"You!" exclaimed Edward and the Bridge-Shooter at the same time, as they looked inquiringly at the Cripple.

"Yes," he replied, "it was I who warned your master. On the night of May-day, at the dearest hour of that night, I was restless, and wandered about the Bridge; when, seeing two lurking figures approaching towards my tower, I entered, extinguished my lamp, and was about to fall upon my couch once more, when my ear caught the sound of voices close to the little casement in my tower wall. 'We shall have him safe enough there,' said one. I started up, and placing my ear close to the opening of the window, heard enough to tell me the plot that was laid against you, and all about the letter recommending that you should be sent to Woolwich. It was I who wrote the note which may be said to have saved your life; it was I who instructed the boy to deliver it as he did; and I, too, it was, who sent for the Bridge-Shooter; but he knew not from whom the message and money came."

Osborne expressed his wonder, and also his gratitude. Little more occurred of any consequence until they reached the Bridge.

When they arrived there, the Cripple took out a large key from his pouch, and opening the door of the Bridge-gate tower, bade his companions a right good night, and entered, singing—

"Death is here, and death is there,
And death is round us everywhere."

As he closed the door, Edward heard the old owl, whoo—oo—ooing out a welcome to her husband, as the Cripple called himself; and then Osborne, with the Bridge-shooter, continued his way across the Bridge to the merchant's house. Arrived there, Osborne was surprised and alarmed at seeing lights moving from room to room. He knocked loudly. The door was soon opened by Flora Gray, who was crying bitterly.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Edward, whose alarm was now greatly increased.

"Oh! oh! oh! oh!" was the only answer the broken-hearted girl could utter.

"For Heaven's sake, Flora, speak! speak! what *has* happened?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" again sobbed the poor girl, at the same time pointing with her fore-finger to the rooms above.

Osborne, comprehending her meaning, started up stairs, and hurrying into the front apartment, where he saw a light, he was amazed to find his master sitting there, apparently lost in grief.—"Master! dear master!" exclaimed Osborne, "what, in Heaven's name, has happened?"

"I know not," replied his master, taking a deep-drawn breath. "My wife—my Alice—and my poor child!" His utterance became choked, and burying his face within his two hands, his head sank upon the table near which he sat.

Osborne felt that at that moment he ought not to press his master upon the cause of his grief; so again hurried down, and learnt from the

Bridge-shooter, who had succeeded in making Flora explain, by words, mixed up with sobs and tears, all she knew, which, indeed, was very little, in fact, nothing further than Osborne himself was aware of.

"No, no!" said Flora; "I know what my own opinion is, but that I shall keep to myself: I'll not let my tongue ruin any poor soul breathing—no, I'd rather have it torn out first!"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Edward, his thoughts being turned into a new train, by what Flora had said, "good Heavens! I will never believe that such purity——"

"That's what master says," replied Flora, sobbing. "He believes she's dead, and wont hear a word against her."

Osborne, whose suspicions being aroused, now called to mind many and many circumstances, mere trifles in themselves, yet all tending to confirm his worst fears. He at once determined to have these fears resolved. He sent off the Bridge-shooter to several places, where it was just possible some tidings of his mistress might be obtained, while he himself hurried away, without hinting at where he was going, straight to the lodgings of Sir Filbut Fussy.

When he arrived there, notwithstanding the day had not yet broken, he found persons busily employed, carrying away chests and trunks; and when he inquired whether Sir Filbut was there, they told him they believed he had gone abroad, and that all his things, with the exception of the few they were then taking to the wharf, had sailed several days before for Italy. Sadly, indeed, did he return to the merchant's house; but here, if a doubt yet lingered in his still-hoping mind, he learnt that which annihilated doubt and hope together.

While Osborne had been away, Flora was occupied in prying about, in every corner of her mistress's room, seeking she knew not what, yet hoping to discover some clue to the mysterious cause of her mistress's absence. At last, in the corner of the hearth, in which a fire had recently been burning, she found several pieces of a torn letter, some of them partially consumed, and discoloured by the flames, others blotted, as if by tears, yet leaving sufficient words plain enough to reveal the real nature of the writing. These words were of the most ardent and passionate nature, breathing unalterable affection for her to whom they were addressed; whom that might be, for some time remained uncertain, until again raking over the ashes, two more pieces, nearly consumed, were found; on one the name of "Alyce" could clearly be decyphered, on the other the initials "F. F."

Flora could not conceal her discovery for a single moment, but with the damning evidence, rushed into the presence of her master, just as Edward and the Bridge-shooter had entered.

When the merchant was told what she had found, and he cast his eyes upon the fatal words, in characters he knew full well, he, with the fragments firmly clenched within his two uplifted hands, threw himself with violence upon his knees, and looking towards heaven, his lips moved, but those around heard not what he said: was it a prayer he offered? or was it a blighting curse he then called down from Heaven?

CHAPTER X.

The God of Love, ah, *benedictus!*
How mighty and how great a lord is he!
Against his might there gainen none obstacles;
He may be 'clep'd a God for his miracles,
For he can make at his owen guise
Of every heart, as that him list devise.—CHAUCER

One of them was blind, and might not see.—*IBID.*

DAY after day passed by, but still no tidings of either Alyce or of her child. A settled melancholy fixed upon the heart of the merchant Hewet. All in his dwelling having been forbidden to speak of his unnatural bereavement, to a casual observer, there appeared within that house of real sorrow, but little to call forth pity or surprise. But, although the good merchant, in external appearance, seemed but as a sedate and thoughtful man, there was within his breast a hidden serpent, ever gnawing at his heart. Hewet's love for his wife had been of that all-absorbing nature—that one single feeling of the soul, in which every other sensation of his kindly nature centred. He had had but one thought, one hope from the moment they had plighted their vows, and that hope, that thought, was for the happiness of his adored Alyce. So ingeniously, with such seeming truthfulness, had she returned his love, that to have allowed a doubt of her pure faith to take birth in his mind, would have seemed as sacrilegious, as to have distrusted the goodness of Heaven itself.

In exact proportion to his former unbounded confidence, now came the bitterness of finding himself deceived. Every incident of his wedded life flitted before his heated imagination, as he, night after night, lay upon his sleepless couch; but in no one of his wakeful dreams, could he ever picture to himself a single look, or bring to his remembrance a single word, that had ever passed from the eyes or lips of his adored Alyce, that should have raised a blush upon her cheek, or have blanched his own. But the more these reflections crowded upon his mind, the more violent became his resentment against one, whose consummate art could so cloak her vile feelings beneath the guise of sincerity, that no eye, but the one she wished to do so, could ever penetrate her designs. Could such proficiency in deceit be drawn from a pure heart in an instant, as by a spell? or was this perfection of duplicity the slow growth of long continued habit? He feared the latter; and then the remembrance of his every act of former kindness to her he had loved and trusted, would bring a blush upon his cheek, for having been such a weak confiding dupe. He soon persuaded himself, or believed he had done so, that the only grief he now suffered, was for the loss of his child.

"Why had the wretch," he muttered, "stolen away the only consolation she could have left me! Was it the overpowering love a mother might feel for her offspring? Banish the impious thought! What mother, loving her child, could bring upon that child the stain of infamy,

that its parent's guilt must stamp upon its future life, if that life were to be passed with one, revelling in vice and shame. Oh, no! hatred to him alone could account for the wicked act." As he was about to call upon Heaven to blast her with its just vengeance, he raised his eyes and encountered the lovely innocent features of Alyce in a picture, which had been painted by the great Holbein, and which was regarded as one of the most perfect specimens of his art. The sight, added to the recollection of the happiness which he believed to have been his own, when that picture was painted, completely overcame him, and he wept aloud.

Young Osborne, who was ever on the watch, fearful of the turn his master's grief might take, hurried into the apartment.

"Tear it from the wall!" exclaimed Hewet, covering his eyes with one hand, as with the other he pointed to the portrait of his wife, "tear it from the wall—cut it into shreds with your dagger—burn it to ashes—or cast it deep into the flood—do anything with it, so that you utterly destroy that lying semblance of a fiend in angel's form!"

Osborne could not resist heaving a sigh, as he looked upon the heavenly features of Alyce; but knowing that at that moment it were better not to combat the commands of his agitated master, he hurried away with the picture, promising its immediate destruction.

After this last paroxysm of the merchant's despair, no mortal eye ever again witnessed his distress. His whole mind was henceforth, to all appearance, bound up in his worldly affairs; but inwardly there was a powerful spring at work, which drew into one focus every action; this was, his secret determination to be revenged upon the ungrateful cause of all his sorrow—in fact, to discover, and to kill his wife. To such a pitch of madness had he wrought himself, that in order that his child should never fall as her mother had, his next intention was to bestow the whole of his wealth, and it was already vast, upon some nunnery, with the condition that she should for ever be kept from the eyes of men.

Did he fulfil these insane fantasies?—the book of fate is not yet opened to reveal.

From all the information that had hitherto been obtained, it was pretty evident that the course the fugitives had taken, was towards Italy. Hewet, therefore, under pretence of the King's service, now he had become his Grace's merchant, requiring that he should visit Milan and Venice, in order to select the most costly stuffs, and finest gold work that the world could then produce, obtained permission, and safe conducts, by the King's grace, to enable him to pass through the various states he must traverse, with speed, and tolerable security. Taking advantage of one of his own ships, at that moment about to sail for the Adriatic, he hurriedly prepared for his long and perilous journey. Osborne was placed in full authority at the dwelling upon the Bridge. His other affairs he left in equally trusty hands; then, with a heart sustained against an almost insupportable pressure of grief, merely by the unholy stimulant, a thirst for vengeance, the merchant hastened upon his melancholy way.

We have often pictured to ourselves, the wonderful diversity of sights we should behold, had we the power to pull down the external walls of even a single street, the inmates still remaining

unconscious of our intrusive gaze. What fooleries should we not discover, some of our before-thought wisest capable of enacting!—what virtues in one place—what vices in the next! A simple wall here dividing the most abject suffering from the most maddening joy; the spendthrift here—the miser in the floor beneath. Here the anxious mother blessing with her first kiss the new-born child, while there, at the same moment, the affrighted lost one might be perceived concealing the body of her strangled babe! And yet there is an Eye that sees all this, and more, far more, than even the inventive powers of man could ever dream of. Were we always to keep this one simple truth before our own eyes, how far less actions should we perform that we dare not let the eyes of others gaze at? But if so much of varied interest could be found in the mere visible actions of mortal beings, while viewed without the actor's knowledge, what endless wonders should we not discover, could we but look into all human hearts at once, and there behold the secret workings of hope and fear, of virtue and of vice. How strangely should we be astounded to find that the weal or woe, the happiness or misery of whole nations, instead of springing from the apparent wisdom or mistaken views of sagest or weakest counsellors, was far more likely to be dependent upon the mere smile or frown of some capricious wanton fair one!—to hear the mitred abbot preaching humility, and know that inwardly he was revelling in the pomps and vanities of the high station his hypocrisy had raised him to!—to see the devotee robbing his children to build some abbey—for religion's sake! No! for a monument to his own ostentatious vanity. Had we this searching power, we should find that scarcely one action of a man's whole life ever sprang from the cause professed; but we should also discover that the mainstring by which the heart is moved, however long that string might be, however twisted in and out, or winding through the mysterious secret crannies of the mind, yet it would ever end in one carefully-hidden spot—SELF! Perhaps, of all the selfish feelings of human nature, the two most selfish are those we deem to be the least so—GRIEF and LOVE. The most selfish instance of grief is that which we endure when we are sorrowing for the loss of some dear friend, or child, or beloved partner of our joys and cares. Do we really grieve because of their death? No. It cannot be because they have left this weary world for realms of endless joy—that would be impossible. Then why do we grieve? Because we *ourselves* have lost the happiness their presence ever brought us—that is the selfish cause. The passion, miscalled love, is one entire mass of selfish feelings. Let but the beloved object tell us she would be happier with another than with us, if we really loved, that object's happiness would be our only thought, and we should glory in resigning all our hopes. Is there one mortal who ever did or ever could do this? we fancy not. The love that Master Hewet had ever felt for his dear Alyce, was as pure and as intense as mortal was capable of feeling, and the time had been when he fancied there was no sacrifice he would not submit to for her happiness; but then he believed she was willing to endure as great a sacrifice for him. Every kindness a lover bestows he fully expects will be returned, and that with interest too; if he find that all is taken, and nothing given, love soon gives up the ghost, or flies to some more generous ob-

ject. Master Hewet loved his Alyce so devotedly, that he would willingly have laid down his life for her, but then he would have expected her to have died in consequence—a lover never kills himself if he thinks his death would really please his mistress. Thus it was with the merchant; now he thought his wife would wish him dead, it never for a moment crossed his mind to take his own life: but having had his self-love cruelly wounded, he determined to take hers; and on this, his unhallowed mission, we must leave him for the present.

Time, that untiring old gentleman, who never will be quiet himself, nor let other people be so, was soberly pursuing his way at the merchant's house, when suddenly an odd-looking little fellow flew right in his face. This odd-looking little fellow was a chubby boy, rather saucy in appearance, and has ever been a great favourite with the ladies; he had a pair of wings upon his shoulders, and was armed with a bow and arrows—his name was Cupid. He was perfectly naked, which we presume is the real cause why this odd-looking little fellow is always getting into dark corners, and ever trying not to be seen, at all events, by more than two at a time. "Come, move on, move on!" said the odd-looking little fellow in the most insolent manner, addressing old Time. "When I want you to stay, you never will; so move on, old one, or I'll send you a dart right into your heart, and that's what you won't like; for you know I can destroy you when I will."

Time laughed at Love, as he had often done before. "Poor silly fool," said the old man, "you always were a fool, and always will be; have I still to teach you, it is Time that destroys Love, not Love Time? I fly before you, it is true; but that I do because I know you hate to see me fly; so, since you have come thus suddenly upon this spot, I'll hurry away faster than ever; for I always fly the swiftest wherever you come the quickest." And sure enough, old Time flew off like mad; Cupid, to save trouble, sent two darts at once after him, and where these two darts fell we will now endeavour to discover.

Osborne, as might be supposed, his master being away, and the whole weight of the concern resting upon his shoulders, had enough to do, without spending much time upon the education of Billy-the-bridge-shooter, who was now regularly domesticated in the merchant's house. But as Osborne was not one to form a good intention and not carry it out, he begun seriously to think upon some means of getting the youth a proper master, more particularly as the Bridge-Shooter evinced not only a desire to have his profound ignorance enlightened, but a great aptness in receiving instruction.

It turned out oddly enough, that the master he chose proved to be a mistress. She had herself been a pupil of Osborne, and had, for those days, become a very fair scholar. She could read and write uncommonly well; as to figures, she was not very great; she seemed to think that it was quite enough for girls to do to study their own figures; and the only arithmetic required by the fair sex was the first rule in Hymen's arithmetic, where, strange to say, one added to one only makes one. This rule she had learnt by heart, but as yet had not put it into practice. The reader may doubtless guess, without much difficulty, that the fair instructress chosen by Edward Osborne for the guide of Billy-the-bridge-



Flora and the Bridge shooter at their studies

shooter, in his studies, was pretty Flora Gray. For a long time did she despair of making any impression upon his "stupid head," as she called it; and perhaps his tree of knowledge, which afterwards flourished so well, would have been nipped in the bud, had she not by some unaccountable process, made an impression a little lower down than the head,—in short, just on the left side of his breast. The cause of his making such slow progress at the commencement of his academical labours, arose from a feeling of shame at "a great man"—for youths think themselves great men at a very early age—"being instructed to read and write by a little girl." But he very soon began to discover, like Lord Byron, that fair lips, of all instructors of languages, are the very best. The two great stumbling-blocks over which every sentence he attempted to utter, fell and rolled about in the most admired confusion, were the W's and the V's! "Now, it is a very odd thing," as Flora sagaciously observed, "that all uneducated people should find any difficulty in pronouncing these two letters in their *proper* places, while they do it with perfect ease when placed where they ought not to be."

"But I can't, and I never shall be able to get over those two horrid little letters," said the Bridge-shooter, with a look of utter despair.

"Nonsense," replied Flora; "now try—say water!"

"Vorter!" roared out the Bridge-shooter.

"Now say virtue," continued Flora, looking very gravely.

"Wirtue!" said the Bridge-shooter.

"There, you see; you find no difficulty in pronouncing the *letters*, only you will put them in the wrong places: adorn your virtue with a V, and pop your W into the water, and we shall get on swimmingly."

The poor Bridge-shooter screwed about his lips in all sorts of ridiculous shapes, ere he ventured to exhale his breath in his attempt upon VIRTUE, and when it did come, the V was about half a yard long; for, having once caught hold of it, he seemed but little inclined to relinquish so valuable an acquisition. "V—e—e—e—e—e—hirtue!" said he, with a jerk, and then took a long-drawn breath, as if completely overcome by the effort he had made.

"Excellent, excellent, excellent, indeed," said Flora, with an encouraging smile. Her smile of encouragement, at such a moment, instead of laughing at his awkward attempt, proved Flora to be an instructress of consummate tact—those who would teach well, must praise, never ridicule. So delighted was the poor Bridge-shooter with this, his first conquest over so formidable a foe, that "virtue" henceforth was for ever in his mouth, and, we are delighted to add, in his heart too. He got over the water with much less difficulty; here he seemed more in his element, and by following the same process of elongation, wor—or—or—or—ter flowed on brilliantly, and he was again encouraged by Flora's pretty smile. After their lessons, which generally took place an hour before sunset, in the pretty room behind the upper balcony, overlooking the river, their conversation always reverted to the strange and wicked conduct of Alysse Hewet. One evening William, for now Flora never allowed him to be called by such a vulgar title as Billy-the-bridge-shooter, observed, "Although I know—"

"Know," said Flora.

"Know," said William.

"Yes," said Flora.

"Know," said William. "Although I *know* that mother is not a vitch—I mean witch, sometimes it is werry, very, odd that she does stumble upon most extraordinary things. Now I vunder, wonder, whether she could by her conjurations, as she calls them, find out for us what has really become of Dame Hewet and the child. Shall we go and see the poor old soul, and ax her?"

"*Ax* her," said Flora, with a look of some little severity, for she had already corrected him upon this vulgarism at least a hundred times.

"Well then, Flora, shall we go and *ax* her? You know this is the eve of St. John, and you have promised that I shall take you about to see all the gay sights to-night."

Poor Flora felt a sigh rising from the very bottom of her heart, for she remembered that another used formerly to take her out upon such occasions; but she checked it, and smiling upon her pupil said, "I never forget my promises, mind you remember yours. If you make one mistake in the verb you have promised to learn, dread my power." What this verb was, we shall by and by explain; but he had already learnt it by heart; so he felt perfectly easy upon that score.

The eve of St. John the Baptist, in our City's olden time, was an epoch of vast interest to our forefathers. The great muster of all the watches of the City took place then; feastings, bonfires, and revelries of all kinds flourished to an enormous extent; but upon all these delightful subjects we shall say but little until we find Flora Gray and William on their way home again. The Bridge-shooter, who, now his rags had vanished and a more becoming apparel substituted, was thought to be by most an uncommonly nice young man, and had poor Flora never seen Harry Horton, there is little doubt but she had thought so too. As they wended their way up Fish-street-hill, they could not resist every now and then halting for a moment to gaze at the vernal decorations of the various houses. Many were covered from top to bottom with green birch, long fennel, and a prodigious quantity of St. John's wort, orpine, white lilies, and garlands of beautiful flowers; the whole street was thronged with people busily employed; some bringing out tables to place before their doors, others carrying faggots; many rolling tar-barrels along to the appointed spots where those ever-beloved sources of delight, the bonfires, were to be displayed. Notwithstanding all they saw, their minds were too full of the subject of their errand, to let them loiter on their way; so, having mutually determined to see all that could be seen, as they returned, they hurried along, passed up Gracechurch-street, then called Grassechurch-street, turned into Leadenhall-street, and were soon emerging from the formidable Aldgate. From this gate, without the walls, or ramparts, extending to Bishopsgate, lay a filthy ditch called, as the spot is to this day, Houndsditch. It had gained that designation on account of this portion of the moat having been, from time immemorial, used as a sort of public cemetery for dead dogs. A low mud wall divided it from the main-road, on the other side of which were a number of small cottages; with little plots of garden ground attached to them, all beyond being open country, including Spitalfields, then a charming

rural Sunday walk, greatly frequented by the citizens. The whole of these cottages were inhabited by poor bedridden people, who were always to be seen lying in their beds close to the open windows, which were built purposely very low, in order that the inmates might be easily viewed by the passers by. On the window-sill was spread a clean white napkin, upon which lay a cross and beads, to indicate that the afflicted could now do nought but pray. It was the custom of the more affluent upon holidays, and many other occasions, particularly on Fridays, to stroll out this way, and while laying in a stock of health for the body, by deserting for a time the too-densely built city, and breathing a little fresh air, to add somewhat to the soul's health, by relieving the wants of their poor afflicted fellow-creatures. In consequence of the ill-usage, and the dreadful fright the Bridge-shooter's mother had experienced on the night when the murder of Edward Osborne had been attempted, she had been seized by a succession of violent fits, which ended in paralysis of the greater portion of her body. Master Hewet's interest had been exerted in her behalf, and she was now settled for the rest of her days in one of those charitably-bestowed cottages. Upon the white napkin lying in her window, were not only the cross and beads, but, considering its reputation, an odd accompaniment to such holy gear—the old black cat was to be seen seated in great dignity. As the Bridge-shooter and Flora Gray entered Houndsditch from Aldgate, William was surprised, in looking along the road towards his mother's cottage, to see before her door a splendid retinue, composed of some twenty gentlemen, all in oright harness, and mounted on magnificent horses. Two reinning pages were holding the bridle of a superb charger, the saddle of which was then vacant. Before he and his pretty companion had proceeded many paces, a youth, gorgeously attired, came from the cottage, and mounting the charger, led the way, followed by the twenty horsemen. As they passed by, the Bridge-shooter had an opportunity of regarding the youth very minutely, for, on seeing Flora was a pretty girl, the youth kissed his hand to her, and seemed inclined to make a halt, which caused a dreadful frown from the poor Bridge-shooter. This called forth a laugh from the whole party, who, as they moved on, kept looking back and imitating their leader's example, all kissing their hands to Flora. The poor Bridge-Shooter was very much annoyed to observe that Flora, instead of being terribly angry, as he thought she ought to have been, raised her head higher than ever, and seemed to regard their insolence as anything but disagreeable.

"Oh, he is coming, Spirit, is he?" said the old woman to the cat, as she saw it rise up, elevate its tail, and arch its back, and then begin to walk along the sill, rubbing itself against the uprights, first on one side, then on the other, and at last against the Bridge-shooter's shoulder, as he now leant into the window to kiss his mother.

"I knew you were coming, boy, I knew you were coming," said she.

"Well, but I don't think that very wonderful, mother," he replied, "considering I come every day!"

"Shall I never convince you that I am gifted to know every event before it happens?"

"I should like to be convinced of that," said the lad, "above all things, and, in fact, I've come to-night on purpose to put your boasted foresight to the test; but before I tell you what I've come about, you must tell me, if you do know everything:"—here he made a motion with his hand behind him to Flora Gray to keep out of sight—"just you tell me who it is I have brought with me?"

"Flora Gray," replied the old woman, unhesitatingly.

The fact was, that in the glass window she saw the reflection of Flora Gray standing behind her son; but this little natural aid to her magic she kept secret to herself; but her reply had an enormous effect in shaking her son's doubts regarding her supernatural powers.

"Hang me, if you're not right, mother," said the Bridge-shooter, drawing Flora forward, "and if you can tell us what we wish to know, as truly as you have hit upon this, I'll swear you're a witch to the last day of my life, though they should burn us both for saying so. But I say, mother, who was that insolent stripling who just left you?"

"One," said the old dame, "who has more faith in a witch's words than her own flesh and blood has; he has gone away in the full belief of my secret influence over the spirits of another world—he came for knowledge, and I gave it to him—but let that pass—let that pass—'tis useless to try to persuade a stone." Saying this she looked very angrily at her son.

Flora softened the old dame wonderfully, by professing implicit belief in the power of witchcraft; but, indeed, nearly the whole population of the kingdom had faith in it; excepting, perhaps, those who professed it.

Had the Bridge-shooter not been her son, and thus too familiarly mixed up with the absurdities of the deccit, he, most likely would have given credit to all she said, as easily as many others did; and even as it was, he, at times, felt his disbelief terribly shaken, by the chance hits she was fortunate enough to make.

As all other attempts to discover the fates of Alyce and the child, had failed, he thought there could be no harm, even if there were no good, in just pleasing his old mother so far, as to ask her aid. Flora now told the old woman the cause of their visit, but the old dame pretended to know it all beforehand, and said she had been nearly the whole day trying with the cards to discover the truth. "I have failed as yet," she said, "but the spell is working—the spell is working!"

At this moment they were all made to start, by the sudden friskiness of the cat, who, jumping down, flew round the room, darted up stairs, was heard bounding about the loft above; then again rushed down, again flew round the room, when, having satisfied her volatile propensity, she suddenly seated herself quietly as before upon the window-sill. This mad kind of freak is not at all uncommon in the feline race, but the old woman turned it, as indeed she did almost everything else, to her own purpose, and exclaimed, "Twenty times to-day has my Spirit been thus wonderfully moved; she will yet bring me the secret she is searching for: will you not my Spirit?"

The cat passed over to her mistress, and began rubbing her head against the old woman's ear, for all the world as though she had been whispering some secret to her.

Flora quite trembled, for seeing this, she began to have but little doubts,

if any at all, as to the locality whence the cat had come, and she now felt inclined to make her visit as short as possible, fearing that the old gentleman might come to claim his imp, but the dame insisted upon trying the cards once more. She took up a worn-out pack, or pair, as they were then called, and spreading them before her on the bed, said, "Every time I open this book of fate, there do I find the Queen of Hearts, meaning dame Alyce——"

"She was indeed the Queen of Hearts, of all hearts, until this sad affair," said Flora, sighing deeply.

"Before her is a knave, and behind her is another; this is the twentieth time they have fallen in the same position—the Knave of Diamonds and the Knave of Clubs."

"Oh," said Flora, "the Knave of Diamonds is plain enough, that means the wicked Sir Filbut, who has caused us all our trouble——"

"And himself some too," said the old woman, "for see, he's turned upside down, and standing upon his head; that speaks but badly for the comfort of his own position: but who know you that would answer to the Knave of Clubs?"

"If they were 'prentice clubs," exclaimed William, "I should say it means Harry Horton."

Poor Flora blushed at hearing the Bridge-shooter speak thus slightly of one she had regarded with tenderness, but even she had began to have her suspicions as to his true character, but she ventured to say, "That it was impossible *he* could have had ought to do with Sir Filbut's wickedness, for there had been moments when she really believed that Harry was more than half in love with dame Alyce himself."

"Was he, girl?" enquired the would-be witch; "yet the cards speak as much, and they never deceive; but enough for one night—enough for one night; but the spell is working—the spell is working. As you re-enter the city, do so by the Postern Gate, the road to it will lead you past the Nunnery of the Minories; ask for the blind girl, Eoline, and give her this little wooden cross—she well knows my meaning. I have seen strange things in the clouds to-day: tell Edward Osborne, on his life not to be away from home to-morrow; he is sought by those who may smooth the rough road he has to follow for many and many a year to come; remember, if I am a witch, the strange visitor to Edward Osborne, I now fortel, will visit him to-morrow—there is much will happen soon—much, much, much!"

"Mother says much," observed the Bridge-shooter to Flora, as they took their way back again, "but we have not gained *much* for our trouble."

"But what can she want," said Flora, "of the blind beauty of the nunnery; surely one brought up in such a holy place, can have nothing in common with witchcraft."

"I don't know that," replied the Bridge-shooter, "there are strange stories getting about, concerning all sorts of nuns, particularly the nuns of St. Clair. Some say they are no better than they should be, or, rather, not quite so good as they ought to be. But never mind such useless things as nuns, and if you will let me, I will just run through the verb' you last set me."

"What verb?" enquired Flora; "I have quite forgotten which it was."

"I shall never forget it," said the Bridge-shooter; "I never found anything half so easy to remember—it seemed to come quite naturally."

"And what was it?" again enquired Flora.

"The verb—to *love*!" answered William, with a peculiar expression, though he imagined it was a verb that could be conjugated by the eyes alone. "It begins, *I love*, and the plural is *we love*; that's the present tense."

"Is it?" said Flora; "then it must be an imperfect tense, I'm sure."

"Indeed, it's the *present*," said William, quite innocently.

"With you it may be," replied the little coquette; "but to me, it sounds much more like the *future*. But I had better set you a different lesson to learn."

"You will set me none," said the youth, "that will make half the impression that this one does upon my mind; indeed, I have thought of nothing else since you gave it to me to learn. Oh, Flora, I wish I dared add one little pro—pro—noun, I think you say it is, to the present tense of that verb—and then I'd say—I—love—you!"

"For shame, William," said Flora; "we must give up our studies if you talk thus; and know, sir, that I do *not* love *you*, nor do I ever intend to do so."

"I know all that, Flora," replied the Bridge-shooter, "nor do I ask you to do it. All I crave, is to be allowed to love *you*, not because you are pretty, for every one could love you for that, but because you are good and kind to those who require your smile and aid. I have never heard you say a cross word to mortal; and even now, how often do you speak in kindness of that poor lost creature, the merchant's wife. These, Flora, are the things that make me love you—not your pretty face or pretty form."

Now, if the poor Bridge-shooter had studied the sex for a thousand years, he could not have hit upon a method more likely to win the good esteem of her he wooed, than the one he, by nature, was pursuing. While denying that he loved her for her beauty, he was still covertly telling her how beautiful he thought her; and yet, even that beauty was nought to be compared to the amiability he discovered hidden beneath it. Why, this was the quintessence of art; and why? because, as the ridiculous is said to be within a step of the sublime, so is the perfection of art within an inch of nature; then, if consummate art can be so powerful, what must nature be? why, resistless! And as in the case of the poor Bridge-shooter, all being nature, the effect of his fervent heart-felt words made more impression upon the mind of Flora Gray than had the years of flattery bestowed upon her charms by Harry Horton. One thing alone was wanting to make the Bridge-shooter's success complete, and chance almost immediately filled up the measure of his hopes, for just after Flora's heart had been so powerfully assailed by the youth at her side, whom should they meet but Harry Horton, now splendidly attired, arm in arm with a man much older than himself, but equally gay in his habiliments. The elder was a tall powerful man whose face

was nearly hidden by a profusion of whiskers, beard, and long moustache. Flora's old feelings for Horton for one instant filled her breast, and she made an impulsive start forward to meet her former flatterer; but he, looking her full in the face, seemed not to know one so humble in station, and turning his head away, passed on. The man of whiskers and of beard had started too, but this was a start of that nature which we make at suddenly finding ourselves in presence of the last person we would have met. He fixed his dark protruding eyes upon the Bridge-shooter, and scowling fiercely upon him, vanished with Horton in the crowd. So astonished had the Bridge-shooter been at seeing a perfect stranger, as he thought him, gaze at him thus, that he had not heeded the agitation which Horton's contemptuous slight of poor Flora had thrown her into. She looked after her false lover, and felt as though she could have sunk into the earth for very shame at herself, for ever having thought of such a worthless wretch. She said not a word, but clung tightly to the arm of William, and pressed it to her heart. She hoped he had not felt the pressure, for she feared the affection she from that moment determined to bestow upon him, might be but the offspring of revenge, and not the pure offering of her heart, which she wished it to be. To hide the mortification she really felt, she put on an air of exaggerated mirth, and laughed quite loudly at the idea of such "a magpie," as she called Horton, "strutting about in his peacock's feathers." But, poor soul! when she returned to her own chamber, she gave way to one long bitter flood of tears, and Horton was torn from her heart for ever.

When they had arrived at the Convent of the Minorites, they learnt that Eoline, the blind girl, had gone to fulfil her usual evening duty, by carrying small cakes and flowers from the nunnery farm to the poor bed-ridden people of the Houndsditch cottages. Upon these errands of charity she was usually accompanied by her brother, as she called him, Willy, the Cripple of the Bridge-gate tower. Now, Eoline was fair—fair as blooming May, and the Cripple had eyes to see and feel that fairness; but Eoline was blind, born blind, and could not see her friend's deformities; she saw but his kindness through the eyes within her heart, and that to her was beautiful. Oft would she say, as they strolled along together, "I wonder, to those who have what you call sight, what the difference can be between ugliness and beauty?"

"The difference between myself and you," the Cripple would reply; "the difference between a devil and an angel!"

"Hush!" said Eoline, trembling; "know you the meaning of the words you utter? No, Willy, no. The wicked spirits, they tell me, are all deformity, because they *are* wicked; you are all goodness, at least to me; you, therefore, cannot be deformed, whatever our ugly nuns may say—I call *them* ugly because they are always unkind to me, and quarrel with each other—so you see I know, Willy, what ugliness really is, although I have no eyes; do I not?"

"Poor child!" said the Cripple, "you will never know what real ugliness is, for you will never see me."

"I see you often," was her innocent reply, "often and often. You never sing but I see you in my ears; and oh, you are so lovely!"

"Oh, oh! ha, ha! he, he——!" laughed the Cripple, at hearing himself thus flattered.

"Oh, do not do that!" ejaculated the blind girl, placing her hands upon her ears; "you frighten me when you do that. It seems as if another being were standing by, a wicked one, scoffing at me for my poor blind folly, in saying the foolish things I do. But I am blind, Willy, blind—and it seems to me that all wisdom lies in the eyes, not in the brain; so do not scoff at me for want of wisdom—I was born blind."

The poor Cripple felt that he would cut out his tongue rather than again utter that discordant laugh; and although he knew he had to fight against all-powerful nature, yet he determined to combat till he conquered—such are the wild achievements love will make mankind attempt.

After the perusal of these last few lines, the reader will not be surprised when we state that the twin shaft which Cupid fired after old Time a few pages back, had fallen upon the heart of the Cripple of the Bridge-gate tower. He dared to love, for he knew that she whom he idolized could never see his misshapened form, and would not therefore ridicule him as others did. Ridicule is the death of love.

Flora and the Bridge-shooter left the cross for Eoline with the portress at the convent gate, and as the night was now fast setting in, they moved quickly forward to enter the city by the postern gate; they strolled through Tower-street, now gaily lighted up, then into Escheppe (Eastcheap); gayer still, which brought them soon once more to Fish-street, now a scene of perfect magnificence. The standing watch were taking their stations, all habited in bright harness, looking like burnished men of silver, from the reflection of the bonfires, roaring at the corner of every street. "Bonfire"—a word formed one half of French, the other Saxon, meaning *good fire*—was lighted for two most worthy purposes. It was anciently at these *good fires* the neighbours came together, and those who had hitherto been enemies, were, by the intercession of others, made to shake hands and become sworn and loving friends. The bonfire also had the power of purifying the air, and thus to a degree preventing plagues and deadly fevers. At every door, that is, of the richer citizens, was placed a table, well supplied with sweet bread and goodly drinks, the worthy owners inviting their neighbours, and strangers passing by, to come and sit awhile in unconstrained familiarity, to make merry, and praise God for the benefits he had bestowed upon them. Not only were the houses, particularly the doorways, adorned with leaves and flowers, but glass lamps were hung out in great profusion, and which burnt the whole night through. In some places, huge branches of iron curiously wrought, were hung out, upon which hundreds of lamps were alight at once, so that nearly the whole city, by the bonfires, lamps, and burning cressets, became almost as light as day. But all this brilliancy was nothing to what was soon to follow, we mean the procession of "THE MARCHING WATCH," and a magnificent procession it certainly was. It passed from the little Conduit at Paule's Gate, to West Cheape, then by the Stocks through Cornhill, by Leadenhall to Aldgate, then back down Fenchurch Street, by Grasse Church, about Grasse-

Church Conduit, and up Grasse-Church Street into Cornhill, and thence into West Cheape again.

To light the watch upon its way, there were no less than seven-hundred cresset bearers, besides the two hundred and forty city constables, every one of whom also bore a cresset; each cresset bearer was attended by a man, carrying a bag containing fuel, so that the cresset bearers and their fuel-men, alone amounted to nearly two thousand. The cresset was a sort of open-work iron basket, fixed upon the end of a long pole, and filled with coals, or other burning materials.

The men wore straw hats, in the front of which was a painted badge according to the company to which he belonged; besides their pay, they were all entitled to a breakfast in the morning. The remaining part of the marching watch, contained about two thousand more persons, many of them old soldiers, who acted as captains, sergeants, &c.; then there were the whiffers, or fifers, drummers, and standard-bearers, sword, players, and trumpeters, the demi-lances, mounted upon their magnificent horses; amongst these, the Bridge-shooter and Flora recognised the young spark, and his twenty gaily-attired friends; then there were, as usual, the morris-dancers, and various pageants, or shows, drawn upon wheels; next came a hundred and twenty constables all attired in bright harness, all of them wearing a large scarlet cloak, called a jorret, and a chain of gold; then came the mayor mounted on horseback, the sword-bearer before him, also mounted, and in fair armour; these were preceded by the minstrels and city waits, the mayor's officers for his guard, in livery of worsted, or say jackets, party-coloured. Above him, too, were his footmen and torch-bearers, and two henchmen on strong horses followed close behind.

The sheriff's watches came the next, but not so large in number as the mayor's, for the mayor had besides his giant, three pageants, while the sheriff's had but two, but they also had a giant each, with harnessed men, that is, men fully armed, in great numbers.

The reader will be at little loss to picture to his imagination the gorgeous, but extraordinary scene, which such a moving mass of light and splendour must have created. So monstrously expensive were these civic displays, that three years afterwards they were entirely put down by royal mandate.

Many were the tables placed without the doors, at which the Bridge-shooter and his fair companion were compelled to take their seats, now beside some princely merchant's dame, now by a wandering friar or a beggar; for on St. John's eve all were supposed to be friends and equals, and none, without offence, could refuse the invitation proffered.

When Flora and her new lover had completely tired themselves out, by seeing the procession pass at least half a dozen times, by running down little by-streets and alleys, in the geographical knowledge of which Billy-the-bridge-shooter had for some years been very great, and then catching the marching watch in a new spot, they took one more glance at the two principal streets, Fish Street and Thames Street, and then returned towards their home upon the Bridge. The gaieties and decorations here were not to be despised, although this was no road by which the watch would pass. Many a well-stored table stood before the open

door of more than one dwelling there. At one of these were seated Master Checklocke, and his two loving friends, Catchemayde and Silk-worm. Cromwell's good ale had done its work so well, that now they not only swore they loved each other, but were in love with all the world; this they endeavoured to prove, by insisting upon kissing Flora Gray, but, being a little the worse for liquor, the Bridge-shooter good humouredly managed to receive all their embraces, instead of the maiden, and then left them in a furious quarrel about whose wife she really should be. Flora and her swain as they entered their door, looked back, and saw the three friends embracing at once, and then fall over the table into the middle of the road.

Edward Osborne had already returned home; they acquainted him with the witch's prophecy, that he would have a strange visitor the next day, and then all retired to rest.

CHAPTER XI.

She weened never have come in such a trap,
 "Alas," quoth she, "that ever this should hap,
 For weened I never by possibility
 That such a monster of marvaille might be;
 It is against the process of nature."—CHAUCEER.

THE war against the monastic orders had now set in with overwhelming fury; many monasteries had already been suppressed; commissioners had been appointed to take possession of these, and to prepare measures for the seizure of others. The enquirers into the lives and habits of the monks and nuns, were let loose over the whole land, and hunted down their victims in couples. The villanies and atrocities committed by these worthless wretches, employed for the purpose by the government, were in many cases too horrible to be recorded.

As a fair sample of the kind of persons engaged upon this religious investigation, as it was called, we may take Harry Horton and his coadjutor, who turned out to be no other than the brother of the Bleary-eyed Bully. This man had, for a long time before, been employed as one of Henry's foreign spies, and it was in returning from his labours in ferretting out some of the designs of the potentates abroad, that he had discovered his dead brother, after the execution at Billingsgate. It was impossible for Horton to have been linked to one more congenial with his own feelings. They possessed the like dispositions for cunning villany, an equal disregard for every virtuous or honourable sentiment, added to a total absence of all feeling for the sufferings of others. There was another point upon which they were perfectly agreed, and that was an unalterable hatred to Edward Osborne. Horton's new ally was called Beltham Spikely, and it was he who had scowled so blackly upon the Bridge-shooter on St. John's Eve. He had completely disguised his visage by allowing his whiskers, beard, and long moustache to grow, which they did most luxuriantly. This was more a whim on his part than a necessary precaution to avoid detection, for such a trifle as tur-

turing within an inch of death a youth humble as Osborne, was not likely to be regarded in any very serious light by those in power, and who at present were in want of all the assistance they could gain from tools as unprincipled as was the Blear-eyed Bully's twin brother. Although there never can be an adequate excuse set forth for the course pursued by Henry the Eighth in the spoliation of the religious houses of this kingdom, yet it must be confessed that the still-increasing depravity of those whose lives should have been holy, had reached such a pitch, that it was no longer possible to repair the rotten fabric—the only method was to pull it down altogether, and erect a new one in its stead. In doing this, justice was completely set aside. The King, the now supreme head of the church—the Pope's own dear “Defender of the Faith,” was he who laid the axe to the very root; he willed it, and it must be done. Neither he, nor those about him, cared much how that doing was accomplished. To tempt the heads of the various houses to resign quietly their lands and wealth, promises of protection and rewards were lavished upon all, but these promises were never intended to be fulfilled, and even protection to the aged was but seldom accorded. All monks under twenty-four years of age were absolved from their vows, no provision made for their support, but were sent adrift at once upon the world, to beg, or steal, or starve, as the chance might be. The elder portion were allowed to make choice of freedom, or, if they preferred the monastic life, they were drafted off in small numbers into other houses, that might for the season be still allowed a short existence. The most helpless of the religious orders were the poor nuns, unused to work, unfriended by the world, because the world was now being taught that the nuns were but so many vicious impostors. They were turned out from their former homes to wander where they would, with no further provision “*but a single common gown a-piece.*”

There was another cause of great suffering, which was that arising from the general poor, who had formerly been relieved at the gates of the various monasteries and convents. Finding these sources of obtaining their daily bread suddenly cut off, the streets in every town, the roads in every direction, soon became thronged with these wandering starving beggars. We may easily imagine, too, what vices were enacted by these thousands of monks and nuns being thrown hopelessly upon the world—many following vicious lives by choice, many driven to it by absolute despair. Terrible scenes frequently took place midst riot and even bloodshed, when some wealthy house, more notorious than others for its reputation of vile practices, was thrown open to the eyes of the world, and all the hidden deceits laid bare, the miraculous-working images brought out into the main road, and after being made to go through their ingeniously-contrived motions, amidst the laughter and ridicule of the very people who, but a short time before, had viewed their workings with amazement and with awe, they were broken up and burnt. The more the crowd found they had been so long deceived, the greater was the resentment felt against the juggling contrivers of the cheat; and in some instances the priests paid the forfeit of their crimes, by being murdered on the spot.

The nunnery which now came under the especial guardianship of

Horton and his companion, was the Convent of the Minorites. The nuns of St. Clair had long held a reputation for great beauty, and their chapel was always thronged, in consequence of the music being performed in a manner far superior at their religious house to that at most others, even of greater pretensions. One of the principal causes of this reputation in music, arose from the beauty of the voices of the Cripple of the Bridge-gate tower and that of Eoline, "The blind-maid of St. Clair," as she was usually called. The Cripple, from being truly ugly and deformed, was regarded as a privileged being at the convent, and, although a man, was allowed the full range, not only of the farm attached, but also of the interior of the nunnery. He was a great favourite with the inmates, because he used to bring them all the news of the external world, and then would sing his sweetest songs to amuse them for whole evenings together. Now, it is not because a human being may be born without beauty, that he must be born also without feeling. It is true that, generally speaking, those utterly devoid of personal attraction, soon acquire so completely a control over their apparent passions, as to keep, at all events, from the world's eye, their inward feelings. This arises from that all-powerful check upon man's words and actions—the fear of ridicule. The poor Cripple would never have dared to own, even to himself, that he loved, had he not fancied he had found in Eoline's blindness an excuse for venturing to give way to the sweetest of all passions. He knew the fascination of his voice, and he also knew that Eoline could hear; a joy extreme was his whenever she owned she loved to hear it. Now, to those even who possess the blessing of sight, the passion of love arises generally more from a contemplation of the beauties of an *ideal* being, than from those which really stand out in form material before the human eye. The maiden while alone, if she but think upon her lover, 'tis then he makes a far deeper impression upon her heart, than when he stands in form confessed before her. If this be true in the case of those who have the gift of sight, how much more intensely must this power of the ideal have acted upon one in the benighted state of Eoline. She had created a being, in her mind's eye, of such perfection, that the most consummate of mortal beauty would have shrunk abashed from being placed in hopeless comparison. Her two most powerful senses were those of hearing and of touch. Now, it so happened, that the Cripple's hand was almost feminine, and when it came in contact with her own, its tender pressure thrilled to her heart; so did his voice when he sang. Thus, then, the blind and lame became sworn lovers, whose truth was likely to endure as long as their lives should last. She was beautiful, but then she had no eyes to read the admiration her charms created. He was ugly, but she saw it not; and that very ugliness was her safeguard against his being tempted from his truth to her, for all who saw him, loathed him.

Before we enter upon the strange occurrences which were soon to take place within the Convent of the Minorites, we must cast a glance backwards, as far as that day upon which the saintly Father Brassinjaw was trotting along the road, mounted upon his little, fat, long-eared mule. It may be remembered he was journeying to the lonely cottage in which Horton had for a time taken up his abode; and he trotted along with a

breast boiling over with saintly indignation against both Horton and the lovely Alyce, for their daring to keep from their confessor so great a secret as the one they endeavoured to hide. So well did Brassinjaw play his cards, that Horton was completely taken off his guard, for he believed the priest knew much more of the truth than he really did; for, in fact, he knew nothing, but he guessed a good deal. Horton soon found, that unless he allowed Father Brassinjaw a good half of the spoil he intended to gather, he should have to relinquish the whole, and must himself be brought to a fearful reckoning. He agreed to all the father's pretty bold demands, which he made, as he said, to show that such duplicity as that of Horton was not to go unpunished by the Church's sense of justice. Horton succumbed the more readily, as he required the services of Brassinjaw to visit the Blar-eyed Bully, and endeavour to find out whether he would die without betraying his accomplices. It was settled with regard to Sir Filbut, that they should fleece him as thoroughly as possible, and that Alyce, for reasons which Horton kept to himself, should not be allowed to guess that Brassinjaw ever for a moment suspected her.

After the execution of the Bully, Horton came in contact with the Bully's second self, his twin-brother; it was arranged that they would all three act in concert. Spikely not only served the king as a spy, but robbed him as a smuggler. He had a vessel of his own, in which he was ever passing backwards and forwards from and to the Continent, orders being given that his boat was not to be too closely watched, enabled him to export from this kingdom vast quantities of that strictly-prohibited article, the staple of our land—wool. The most usual method employed to deceive the officers of the customs, was to pack the wool in beer casks, and so carelessly was the duty of examination performed, that a little yeast being smeared about the bunghole, was deemed precaution quite sufficient to prevent detection.

Sir Filbut Fussy was tempted to pay a large sum for this vessel to convey him and Alyce, and all his valuables, to Italy; and as it was not known when the fortunate hour might arrive, it was settled that all Sir Filbut's goods and chattels should be shipped by degrees, and then all things kept in readiness, so that the moment Sir Filbut stepped his foot aboard, the sails might be set, and thus the deeply-plotted villany consummated.

Brassinjaw agreed to the attempt to drive Osborne out of his mind by fright, and it was his own scheme that Spikely, being so like his dead brother, should buy his clothes from the executioner, and pass for the ghost of the Bully. The reader may remember the scene in the chapel of St. Thomas of the Bridge, and the supernatural disappearance, as Osborne at the time, believed it to be, of the ghost, as it descended the stairs to the crypt below, and which Brassinjaw had declared he never saw, although he ascended at the very moment. The more secure Horton and his companion believed themselves to be, the less did they feel inclined to go shares with Brassinjaw, and they were ever trying to chouse him out of his proportion of the profits. This was a great want of wisdom on their parts, for clever as they might deem themselves to be, they

should have remembered that a priest in those days was not one very likely to sleep with more than one eye closed at a time; and as to cunning deceit, Brassinjaw was a man who could have given either of them half a dozen points, and have still won the game easily. He agreed to everything they dictated, but he kept a careful watch, and noted down every attempt to catch him, intending one day to make each lay a trap for themselves. Greatly was the saintly Father Brassinjaw perplexed to know how to make the most of the secrets he possessed. He already foresaw the religious storm that was threatening to burst upon the heads of him and all of his fraternity. He had already collected a good round sum from his devotees, and by taking out the real jewels from the offerings to his church, and substituting false ones in their places. His excuse to himself for this was, that they might not fall into the power of the sacrilegious thieves, who were now beginning to be sent over the country by the King, to seize upon all the valuables they could lay their hands upon. Some of his other schemes we shall shortly have to disclose.

Horton had proved himself such an adept at finding out the vices of the poor monks, and nuns, who fell beneath his hands, that Cromwell bestowed on him almost unlimited power over all but the lives of the poor creatures intended to be sacrificed. He and his companion now took the affairs of the Nunnery of the Minories into their most serious consideration; and having extorted from the sisterhood all they could by threats or promises, they still felt convinced that more secrets lay hidden within the bosoms of many of the nuns, and that if they could but make them speak out, there would be, at least glorious amusement, if not great gain for themselves in a worldly point of view. A diabolical idea entered the head of Horton, which made Spikely roar with laughter, and so taken were they both with the glorious thought, that they hurried off at once to put it into execution. The Abbess was away from home when they arrived; for this they were rather glad, so putting on a look of mock gravity, they summoned the nuns before them, and for a time, carried on the examination in as serious a tone, as their inward determination for mischief would allow them to assume. Presently the grand scheme was to be carried out, the wine cellars were thrown open, the wine brought forth, and the poor nuns compelled to drink until they became mad from intoxication. Some laughed, some sang; others danced about, not knowing what they did, encouraged by the applause and laughter of the two fiends who witnessed this horrid scene. Some, who were less stupified by the effects of the wine they had drunk, fell down in fits of weeping upon the floor. The scene was now becoming too dreadful to describe, when the Abbess returned, leading by the hand the blind girl, Eoline.

Who can portray in words, the feeling of despair, of rage, of shame, that filled the breast of the Abbess, as she beheld the fiendish scene. "Ah, ah! my beauty!" exclaimed Horton, as he saw for the first time the lovely Eoline, "come hither, my bright-eyed fair one,"—he knew not that she was blind, for although usually her eyes were gently closed, yet, when alarmed, the lids uprose, and then those eyes were beautiful



Shakespeare's treatment of the theme of the 'Clair'

to look at, though sightless—"come hither, and sit upon my knee," said he, "and drink confusion to yon old hag, the Lady Abbess."

"Confusion to the Lady Abbess!" exclaimed some of the nuns, who had been compelled to say those words a dozen times before.

"Horror!" ejaculated the Abbess. "Eoline, to your cell, to your cell, or fly the place altogether——"

"Indeed, but she does not!" roared out Horton, "she shall be my own particular angel—I've suddenly fallen in love with her." So saying he rose, as if to approach Eoline.

"Touch her not!" exclaimed the Abbess; "if you lay but a finger on her, I will utter words, that, monster as you are, shall make your hand to wither and fall powerless."

"I'm too much up to your miracles, my old hag, to heed the pretended power of words, although uttered by a holy Lady Abbess. One kiss I will have, if but to put your vaunted juggling to the test."

The Abbess seized his outstretched arm, and hurriedly whispered into his ear a few words, when suddenly he turned, and gazed upon the poor blind Eoline with look aghast. He stood for a second motionless, his eyes then wandered about, his lips moved silently, as if his memory was at work, and he was repeating to himself all which that mysterious agent of the mind, was bringing up from her hidden stores; at last he exclaimed—"If what you say be true, and I believe it is so, you have given up a secret which to me is worth her weight in gold. You are right—right—she is safe from me, and mind, that on your life, you keep her safe from others. If you play me false, there's not a limb of one of you, that shall not by the rack, be made to bend the wrong way easier than the right. If you would save the miserable roof that shelters you, serve me, and serve me truly. It will not be long before you know my determination; but I have other things to do before I can look to this, in the way I must. Keep the secret still, until I have determined what course you must pursue."

The two monsters now left the nunnery; the moment they were gone, the few nuns who had fled from fear, upon the approach of Horton and his myrmidon, and had taken shelter in the farm belonging to the convent, now returned, and with kindly care took charge of the poor creatures, who still were acting madly under the influence of the intoxicating draughts they had been compelled to swallow.

The Abbess sat musing for a few minutes, while working her fingers rapidly through her beads; she wept for a moment, then dashing away the tears, started up as if a sudden determination had seized upon her mind. Late as was the hour of night, she dispatched messengers in various directions to find out Father Brassinjaw; they were commanded to bring him straightway to her, as she must consult with him on an affair of the deepest import. One of the servants of the farm was then sent to command the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower not to lose a moment, but to hasten to the convent.

The scenes that had just taken place, had thrown the whole establishment into the wildest excitement. "Child," said the abbess to the blind girl, "bless thy want of sight! better, far better be without eyes, than having eyes, be forced to look upon the sights I have this night

witnessed : but they are but the endings of bad beginnings ; years may roll on—years of fancied security ; but there is an ever-invisible working of fate that never sleeps. I would confess thee to-night, child. I have deep reasons for the act. Follow me to the chapel, and at the altar's foot, mind that you answer truly every question I shall put."

The Abbess having whispered some orders to those about her, left the hall ; she bore in her hand a lamp ; this was the only light within the chapel, and dark and melancholy did it look. The Abbess placed the lamp upon the altar, then kneeling down, murmured a long prayer. This ended, she confessed the blind girl, Eoline, whose answers appeared to give great comfort to the mind of the Abbess, who, at the conclusion of a long string of interrogatories, kissed her forehead, saying, "All may yet be well, at least for thee ; would that my passions were as calm, as pure as thine !"

The Father Brassinjaw now hurried into the chapel, and, for a wonder at so late an hour, was sober. He was soon made acquainted with all that had happened, and, notwithstanding the sanctity of the spot, he let loose to his feelings, and called down a good round curse upon the head of Harry Horton, for daring to violate a region he regarded as peculiarly his own. The Abbess, leaving Eoline praying at the altar, retired with the reverend hypocrite to a distant part of the chapel, to consult with him on her intended project. They debated the subject warmly, but in the end the saintly Father Brassinjaw fell entirely into the views of the Abbess, who, ringing her little silver bell, summoned the inmates of the sacred pile to prayer. Eoline was ordered to retire, and do whatever she was bidden. Those whose duty it was, immediately commenced lighting up the chapel, which, in an incredibly short space of time, changed from that of gloom to brightest splendour. The candles upon the altar, ranging from the length of a few inches to that of several feet, were all ignited, and gave a peculiar beauty to the midnight scene ; not a lamp was left unlighted. The incense sent forth its peculiar holy vapour throughout the sacred aisles, and all the appliances of the gorgeous style of worship connected with the Roman Catholic Church, were called into requisition. Father Brassinjaw put on his sacred robes, and had just performed his first genuflection before the altar, when Willy the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower entered the holy precincts. He was about to take his usual place as a singer, when he was astonished at being beckoned by the Abbess to approach her, and still more so, when he heard her thus address him. "Be not surprised at this unusual call, or rather, let not-surprise (for surprised you must be) so bind up the free will of your brain, that you repent to-morrow of the act you are called upon to perform to-night, that is, if your inclination jump with the chance that this life's strange adventures now present you. Long have I known, that notwithstanding your hopelessness in such a case, that you have loved !" The Cripple was indeed astonished, for though he could not disguise the truth from himself, he had studiously done so, as he thought, from the eyes of the scoffing world ; but he was still more astonished as the Abbess proceeded in her address. "The object of your love," she said, "is Eoline !" Here all present, excepting the speaker and the priest, appeared as surprised as did the poor Cripple ; but when she added, "Will you con-

sent to marry her?" he knew not whether he lived or was in another world, or whether all he saw and heard was the strangely-born offspring of a dream. He rubbed his eyes, his ears; he looked around in wild amaze; then falling upon his knees, exclaimed, "Oh! holy, holy saints, have pity, have pity upon a wretch, and free him from the witchcraft that now surrounds him! Speak, speak to my soul, and tell me what his means!"

The Abbess, taking him by the hand, said calmly, "It means nor more nor less than what my words import. Are you willing, from your own free agency, unbidden, unconstrained, to take to wife the blind girl, Eoline?"

"How can such a deformed, degraded thing as I, say yes? And yet were I but like to other men, and she could love me, nor racks, nor tortures, nor seeing of death itself, should make my lips say no!"

"I knew as much," replied the Abbess; then again sounding her little silver bell, all the servants of the nunnery farm entered the chapel, and, amidst several nuns, the Cripple beheld the fair star of all his heart's most secret hopes, enter the chapel. She was now attired in white, and over her head, reaching to the ground, hung down a superb veil. She answered as warmly to the questions put to her, as he had done, regarding her free acceptance of the Cripple for her husband. Upon this the Abbess lay great stress, and called all present to witness that no force had been employed. Not an act that could render the marriage lawful and indissoluble, was omitted; every one present either signed their names, or made their crosses, as witnesses to the holy contract; and thus to the heart's joy, but surprise unfathomable of both, did the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower and the lovely blind girl, Eoline, find themselves suddenly man and wife.

"For reasons well known to ourself, and our holy Father Brassinjaw," said the Abbess, "it is requisite this marriage, for a season, be kept a profound secret."

The Cripple was rather relieved than annoyed at hearing this; for, so completely by surprise had he been taken, that although he had a wife, he had no idea of where he was to take her, or how he was to provide for her. The only boon he craved, and that he did secretly of the Abbess, was for permission to divulge the truth to one friend—and that friend was Edward Osborne. This permission being granted, the assemblage dispersed. Father Brassinjaw remained for some time in secret conference with the Abbess upon their future plans; and the Cripple, taking a kind adieu of his sweet young wife, strolled towards the Bridge.

The farther he receded from the nunnery, the more and more did the bright vision seem to vanish from his view, until at last, as he placed the key in the tower door, and heard the welcome of the old owl, he really began to imagine that he rather dreamt, or was the sport of fairies. "If this be true, in very deed, old wife," he said, addressing the owl, "I must become another Harry, and divorce you, or cut off your head. Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he!—curses on that laugh! I have sworn to conquer it; and I will, or tear my tongue out."

We must now leave the Cripple in his sea of dreamy wonder. He

knew not what to think—was he married? It is a thing that few men ever doubt of, if once they try it; but his marriage had been so like a tale of wild romance, that a doubt would still arise; and in his dreams that night he dreamt it was a dream.

CHAPTER XII.

Behold my bloody wounds deep and wide.

CHAUCER.

HEWET, notwithstanding the alternate quarrels King Henry was always having, first with the King of France, then with the Emperor of Germany, then with the Pope, this day being their friend, the next their bitterest enemy, arrived safely in Italy. He wandered from place to place, inquiring wherever he had heard Sir Filbut Fussy had friend or relation, about the parties he was seeking; but he could learn nothing likely to throw a light upon the strange elopement. It is true, he heard in Milan that Sir Filbut had written to announce his intended journey; but he had not arrived, nor had any of his acquaintances lately heard from or of him. As Queen Jane was now ill, and the King having determined that no coronation should take place, the ostensible purpose for which the merchant had travelled so far, was useless, and Master Hewet received orders to return with all dispatch to England. The vessel arrived in the Channel, and landed him on the Sussex coast, for it was Master Hewet's wish to pay a mercantile visit to a town that lay hard by. Having accomplished the end he had in view, he started on his homeward journey, riding post, and attended by a country guide.

The guide proved a loquacious clown, whose tongue ran on much faster than his horses. "I make bold to guess your honour be from foreign parts?" observed the guide.

Hewet nodded a slight assent.

"Ah! they be strange places, I have heered. The Frenchmen, they says, can live on nothin, and the Italians eats their wittles by the yard. Why don't they live on beef and puddin as we do? It's our beef and puddin that makes us thrash 'em as we always does."

Master Hewet, finding he must listen to his guide, whether he wished it or not, endeavoured, by a leading question or two, to elicit, if possible, a little of the flying news of the day.

"News!" said the guide, "oh, ho! there be plenty of news, only it's all old; that is, it's the same thing over and over again. We know that if we are told that Queen Anne's an angel to-day, we shall hear that she's a devil to-morrow; and if the King's got a new wife this week, he'll have a newer one next. I wish he'd take a fancy to my old woman, for I'm plaguy tired on her!"

"But," said Hewet, "is there nothing stirring in these parts?"

"Stirrin!" replied the guide, "oh, ho! there be plenty a stirrin hereabouts. There have been two chaps down here stirrin up the old nuns like new 'uns. One was called Master Spike, I thinks, and a sharp

chap he was ; the other—but he was a precious bad 'un amongst the nuns, I heered—was called Master Harry Horton."

"Horton?" said Hewet.

"Oh, ho! Horton, that was the worst 'uns name ; but they're gone to Lunnun town, and a good riddance to bad rubbish, says I."

The road through which they journeyed being fully exposed to the burning sun, became intolerably oppressive. The guide, perceiving that the merchant could not bear the heat so well as he could, said, "If you'd take a fool's advice, just jump down here, get over that stile, and walk through the wood. I'll take the horses round to the other side, two miles off ; you'll find it a lovely shady grove to stroll through, and you'll come out as cool and fresh as a daisy. I see that you are well armed, not that there's much to be feared on. I hav'n't heered of a robbery there for a good many days past, and I don't think any one has been killed there for these six months."

This off-hand manner of the country clown, in speaking of the danger from robbers or murderers, should not be regarded by the reader as far-fetched, or unlikely to be pretty near the usual way in which desperate acts were then spoken of ; for so brutalized had all classes become by habit (we speak of their appreciation of the horrible), that to hear of a murder having been committed, was to listen to something scarcely worthy of a second thought ; and as to robberies, we may easily imagine to what extent they were carried, when we find it on record, that during the reign of "Bluff King Hal," in the olden time of "*Merrie England*"—heigho ! no less than upwards of SEVENTY TWO THOUSAND of "great thieves, of petty thieves, and rogues" were hanged ! King Henry reigned thirty-eight years, so that there were, taking them at a round average, per year, one thousand nine hundred, or rather more than five executions for *every day during the whole reign*. If it were taken into account the executions (in many cases murders) for alleged treason, or heresy, the numbers would become more like seven for every twenty-four hours, during thirty-eight years.

When we reflect upon these things, strong doubts will obtrude on our mind, whether, notwithstanding all our boasted civilization, it be possible to discover in the annals of any Eastern, despotic, barbaric state, a more appalling disregard of human life ; for, let it be remembered, that those executions did not form any part of martial retaliation in time of war, or of massacres in a time of revolt, but were cold-blooded, judicial, premeditated acts.

Having made this slight digression, the reader will, we trust, not feel surprised at the countryman appearing to think it very commendatory of the locality, to assert that "he had not heard of a robbery there *for a good many days past* ; and not of a *murder*, no, not for at least six months !"

Although this high praise regarding the safety of the road through the wood, might not be quite satisfactory to some, yet the merchant felt so oppressed and overcome by the heat, that he at once followed the guide's advice ; and receiving very minute directions with respect to the way he was to go, and also a large whistle, that the guide declared could be heard at least five miles off (this was in case he should be attacked)

Master Hewet crossed the stile and entered the wood; for some way he could hear the guide singing a country ditty, in an accent as broad as his own shoulders: the rustic's ditty ran something after this fashion:—

Tho' merry wag beards in the stately hall,
 Yet merry wag tails on the rustic green;
 Tho' maids of the green wear nor coif, nor caul,
 And dames of the hall sport their silken sheen—
 Pray which be the happier life of the two?
 Why, fool! can't you tell I?—then why should I you?
 Fol de rol, de rol, lul de rol, fol de rol lol!

In most of our olden ditties we find this style of ending a verse—we mean with “Fol de rol, de rol,”—greatly in vogue; and as poets generally kept their most pungent witticisms to the last, we have no doubt there is some hidden meaning in these concluding syllables, well worthy the attention of our most recondite and laborious antiquarians; would that we had time and talent to discover it! But hark! the voice of the rustic has not yet died away—

'Tis useless to try, mon, to mark out the best,
 For God makes as happy, a dog as a cat.
 'Tis like to him blessing—and him that is blest,
 The pleasure's the same—depend upon that.
 So which be the happier life of the two?
 Why, fool! can't you tell I?—then why should I you?
 Fol de rol, de rol, lul de rol, fol de rol lol!

As their roads lay almost at right angles to each other, the distance between them at every step increasing, the sound of the countryman's voice in the same proportion diminished; it became fainter and fainter, and as Collins would have said, had he then lived, was “by distance made more sweet.” The last sound had died away, and all was still as death. The merchant found the coolness of the shade refreshing in a powerful degree; not a leaf rustled in the air, not even a bird's sweet note was heard to change the monotony of the silence which reigned around. Now the trees closed in so thickly over the narrow path, that night appeared suddenly to have usurped the hours of day—sometimes a spot, sometimes a streak of light, would steal through here and there, and then a wide green open space appear, but still no sound. The merchant had again entered the pathway, on the other side of one of those open spaces, and was mending his pace, for the stillness became oppressively monotonous. He almost started at the sound of his own breathing, so loud did it seem to his ear, made doubly sensitive by straining to catch a sound that never came. He was just reflecting upon the truism, that how different are the same things under different circumstances—the jargon of the country clown he had just before thought almost unbearable, he would now have welcomed as sweetest music. He was half tempted to try the effect of the loud whistle he carried in his hand, but feared that they who heard it might think it cowardice that had prompted him to use it.

It now occurred to him, might not the guide be an accomplice of the very robbers he had mentioned as sometimes paying visits to these woods, and have given him that whistle, to call them to the spot to murder him? The merchant, although no coward, had by degrees brought his mind into so nervous a state, that he had nearly sunk upon the earth, as a

sound resembling a groan suddenly struck upon his ear ; he paused, and held his breath, until large drops of perspiration burst from his forehead ; he had almost convinced himself that it was but the effect of imagination, when he heard the groan repeated, and now so audibly, that no longer doubt remained. He drew his sword, and standing on his guard, listened to discover the direction whence the sound proceeded. Ere long a deep-drawn sigh too plainly pointed out the spot ; it was one he had just passed. He retraced his way for a few paces, which brought him again to the edge of the light open space. A faint voice now endeavoured to call for help, and pushing aside some underwood, the merchant discovered the body of a man ; he drew it forth, and kneeling down, raised up the dying man's head upon his arm, when, what was his horror, to discover the features of the blighter of all his hopes. Sir Filbut's eyes met his ; he uttered a low shriek and fainted.

A thousand feelings hurried across the mind of Hewet ; at one moment he had raised his sword to take the little life that yet remained. Should he leave him there to rot like a dog, as a just punishment for the wrongs he had inflicted ? He knew not what to do ; revenge, hate, pity, all contended at once within the merchant's breast ; as he still gazed upon him, lost in doubt, the eyes of the wounded man again opened, and he strove to speak. So weak was he from loss of blood, that his lips moved several times without uttering a sound ; at last he said, as a smile passed over his features, " She—she—is innocent ! " and then sank back again exhausted.

The merchant for a moment felt his heart rise into his very throat—he seemed choking. " Oh, Heaven ! " at last he exclaimed, " make but that appear, and I will willingly lay down my life where now you lie ; speak—speak—for mercy sake speak those words once more."

Sir Filbut did not move, and Hewet believed that all was ended ; yet, one effort might be made ; he placed the whistle to his lips, the shrill sound of which had scarcely died away, when it was answered by another, and in a few minutes Hewet saw his country guide hurrying towards him, attended by three or four other country clowns.

They did not appear at all astonished at what they saw, their only surprise was, that their quarter-staves were not required to protect the merchant. A few branches were soon laid across each other, and a quantity of grass placed upon them, and then the wounded knight ; in this manner he was soon borne out of the wood.

The merchant's anxiety was now so great, fearing that he would die ere he had made that clear, which was at present hid in the deepest mystery, that he tempted the men, by promises of high reward, to continue their road as quickly as possible towards London, where proper assistance could be obtained.

Edward Osborne had been apprised, that on that day he might probably see his good master return home, so he made up his mind, that the merchant's coming would be the fulfilment of the witch's prophecy ; but in this he was mistaken, for a very different visitor called upon him at the house upon the Bridge.

Flora and the Bridge-shooter being both at the front window, and seeing a splendid retinue approaching, put their heads still further forward, but

the Bridge-shooter popped his own in, and drew Flora from the window too, for he recognised in the leader of the party, the handsome youth who had noticed Flora, and kissed his hand to her; they were watching at a distance from the window until the party should have passed, when what was the poor Bridge-shooter's consternation, to see the handsome youth draw up at the door, alight, and then enter his master's house.

The man in the shop, believing Edward Osborne to be in the first floor, shewed the stranger into the very room in which Flora and William were; to attempt escape was useless, so the Bridge-shooter stood looking vastly silly, and poor Flora blushed enormously.

"What!" said the youth, "is it indeed you, my pretty maid? Why, I have been dreaming about you all night; but it was not to seek you I am now here, but one Edward Osborne."

At this moment Edward entered: "That is Master Edward," said Flora, again blushing, and with William was about to retire.

"Nay, stay!" said the youth; "the more who hear what I now say to Edward Osborne, the more shall I be pleased." He then went towards Edward and frankly taking him by the hand, said, "Sir, I owe you a debt." Edward stared with surprise, "a debt that at this moment I am unable to pay, but one I wish to acknowledge: Edward Osborne, I owe you my life! Do you not remember saving a youth, who was drowning up by Chelsea?—I am he. Do not think me ungrateful that I have not been to thank you before, but I knew not until yesterday the name of my preserver. Those who were with me, when they saw that I was safe, sought you, but in vain; you were gone, no one knew whither. After all other enquiries had failed, as a mere jest, we visited a certain cunning woman at Houndsditch, and would you, or any one believe it, by her magic art, she instantly told me your name, and where you could be found." To the three whom he addressed, this did not seem very wonderful; but he continued, "Henceforth I shall never doubt witchcraft again. I come, not only in my own name, but in that of my father also, to tell you, that throughout your life, if either of us ever can be of service to you, command, and you shall not find us wanting. I am called George Talbot—my father is the Earl of Shrewsbury."

Edward Osborne said a hundred pretty things fitted to the occasion, and, as usual, whenever swimming was mentioned, he always gave the whole credit of his own accomplishment to his humble friend, the worthy Bridge-shooter. Upon this, William had a real Earl's son shake him by the hand, who repeated to him the same promise he had made to Osborne. He placed a very valuable ring upon the finger of Edward, as he once more took him by the hand at parting; then turning to the Bridge-shooter, he said, smiling, and glancing towards Flora, "The frown you gave me when last we met, told me pretty plainly in what quarter *your* heart lies; so, remember, when you two marry, I will give away the bride. Farewell, and believe me, the promises a Talbot makes he keeps!"

Osborne attended the youth to the door, and after another smile and another shake of the hand, George Talbot, with his gay companions, passed across the Bridge.

"Now, is not this like all mother's witchcraft?" said William; "you

have but to wait for four-and-twenty hours, and you find it's all moonshine. Why couldn't she have told us yesterday who was coming, and what he wanted, instead of making such a mystery about it? But then it wouldn't have appeared like magic. The spell is working, the spell is working," he said, imitating the manner and tone of the old woman. "Well, if it makes her happy, and doesn't do her any harm, perhaps, it's as well to let her have her way, poor old soul."

"The Earl of Shrewsbury," said Osborne, musing; "he is high in the favour of the King, a great soldier, and of a most noble line. You see, William, what fine friends your instructions have brought me. But, hoping I may never stand in need of his favours, I am still glad to find that the great have memories for little services received. I have ever been taught the contrary."

"And what a handsome young man he is," said Flora; "and what a sweet smile he has; and——"

"And he said he'd give you away; that's more than I'd do," said the Bridge-shooter, "only let us once be married."

"Married, pooh!" said pretty Flora, tossing up her head; "you don't think I'd marry a boy that's still learning his letters."

"Never mind my letters," replied William; "I know—I mean know—yes, I know the verb to love better than you do, with all your learning."

"*Learning!*" said Flora, with great gravity. "Correct speaking always proves gentility of connections."

"Are all things in readiness for our good master, if he return to-night?" inquired Edward.

"Oh, yes, Master Edward," replied Flora. "Heigho, heigho! would that we had more comfort to give him when he comes; but his house is desolate. Hark! what murmuring sound is that?"

Flora and the Bridge-shooter ran to the window, and looking towards the entrance of the Bridge, they perceived a crowd approaching. As it came nearer, they were surprised to see in the midst of it the good merchant, Master Hewet. They all instantly hurried down to the front door, and surprised indeed they were, when the countrymen who carried the wounded knight, now hidden from the gaze of the crowd by a large cloak, brought their burden into the merchant's shop. The crowd, who had gathered a few particulars from the country-guide, were aware that the litter bore a wounded man, but whom they knew not."

"I wonder not at your surprise," said Hewet to those in his house, "at seeing me arrive thus accompanied; but your astonishment will be increased a hundred fold when you look upon the features of him who lies there, as I fear, dying. Wait not to ask questions, but prepare a couch whereon he may lie at ease."

"This way," said Osborne, opening the door of the room behind the shop, which, during the merchant's absence, he had made his sleeping-room, that he might the better guard his master's property. When the dying man was lifted upon the couch, and the cloak removed, Osborne's astonishment was indeed extreme. The physician whom the merchant had summoned to attend, as they came along, now examined the wounds; they were five in number, and as he regarded them, he

shook his head in a manner that augured but little hope. Having dressed the wounds, and administered a restorative, the physician retired, promising to come again, but at the same time whispering to the merchant that "he believed it would be merely to look upon a corse."

The merchant, as they sat watching the dying man, in a low voice acquainted Osborne with the manner in which he had discovered the knight, and the blessed words, the only ones he had yet uttered, which told of Alyce's innocence. This made Flora weep tears of joy, for she loved her mistress dearly.

Sir Filbut moved uneasily upon his couch; they ran to him, when looking around him, he said, "Am I indeed beneath this roof? It is but justice—justice—that I should die here. I have but a brief space left to render all the reparation now within my power: pray Heaven may grant me sufficient strength to say all I would have you know. But first, bear witness that here I swear, before Heaven and man, that Alyce is as an angel innocent. My vanity, and the plottings of a fiend, have wrought this misery. You remember the day that Alyce left this roof? I waited her coming with all the mad vanity of a fool; she came, but instead of her eyes beaming with love, as I had hoped, and indeed expected, they were red with weeping. A look of shame and indignation overspread her features as she said, 'I have taken a bold step, but one my heart tells me my injured pride will justify. Tell me, tell me,' she exclaimed, bursting into tears, 'what have I ever done to call from you this deadliest insult an honest wife can e'er receive—the words of love from any but her husband?' 'Alyce,' I said, astounded at what I heard, 'you cannot, Alyce, pretend to be ignorant, after the letters you have received.' 'Letters,' she replied, 'I have received no letters but the one I found in my room last night, and that I tore and burnt, after drowning it in tears of shame.'"

Here the merchant and Flora looked at each other, for they remembered the fragments of the letter they had found, and which had seemed so thoroughly to have proved her guilt.

"No letters!" I exclaimed, "why, Flora has given you at least twenty."

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Flora.

"Do not interrupt me," said the knight. "I know now that you were faultless. I then explained to her how Horton, your apprentice, working upon my vanity, had first told me that she had confessed to Flora her love for me. I paid him heavily to buy up Flora's silence, and to tempt her to give my letters secretly to her mistress. He pretended to bring back messages of kindness and affection. All circumstances combined to lead me on in my madness. One night, during your absence, while singing beneath her window, I saw a female form watching at the casement—the window gently opened——"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" exclaimed Flora; "some of the mischief, then, I did really cause. It was I who opened the casement, to listen to a serenade offered, as I thought, by her intended to Alice Vaughan, opposite."

"I thought it was your mistress. Horton had told me she would expect me on that night. Oh! how I blush, not only for my villany,

but for my weakness, in thus being made the dupe of such a wretch ! But what had most confirmed me, was Alyce's reception of the costly diamond I sent her by him."

"He told us," interrupted the merchant, "he had found it, and prayed of my wife to wear it for that one day, and that no doubt the next he should discover the right owner. The next day he said he had done so, and received it back again, and we never saw it more."

"So Alyce told me," said the knight ; "it was *his* scheme, the offer I made to teach her riding ; he told me it was her own idea. The thing that surprised me most was, that believing as I did that I possessed the affection of Alyce, yet, whenever we were alone, no look, no word, ever escaped her that you might not have witnessed. He told me that was her whim ; she would not allow a word of love but in my letters, and that I must put up with her fancies until we were safe abroad. Finding that I had indeed been duped, I fell upon my knees before Alyce, and sought her forgiveness. I told her that a vessel lay in the river, in which I had believed she was to fly with me to Italy ; that on board that vessel Horton had conveyed all my wealth, and that I would hasten thither, and from that hour she should never more be insulted by my presence. I left her, my heart bursting with feelings of remorse for my conduct towards that angel and yourself, with vengeance against the villain Horton, and shame for my own weak folly. I was on my way to seek out Horton, and bring him to a dread account before I fled this land for ever. I had not gone far, when I was suddenly seized and dragged to a boat. I was conveyed on board the very vessel I had paid so much to purchase. I was kept close prisoner in the hold. The man who appeared to have command was a giant in form, with eyes unnaturally protruding. He returned to the shore, after giving orders to sail to the Continent, and when the cargo was delivered, to return to a certain part of the Sussex coast, and there await his coming. After we were well at sea, I was removed to a better prison. By what I could gather from words that reached me through the partition of my cabin, I learnt that the crew were smugglers, and that they believed my fate was to be a watery grave. At last we returned in sight of the Sussex coast. One dark night, despair giving me strength, I managed to force so much away from the sides of the little window of my prison, that at last I succeeded in making my way thence into the flood beneath. I swam to shore. The next day, I was on my way to denounce Horton, when, near the spot in which you found me, I saw two men in the distance, who perceiving me, muffled their faces in their cloaks, and receded again into the wood. I had only just entered the covered path, when I was suddenly stabbed. I saw not those who inflicted the wounds. I had fallen on my face—had fainted !"

Here Sir Filbut appeared completely exhausted, but after a violent effort, he said, "Ere I sink in death, let me be blessed by hearing from the lips of Alyce, that I die forgiven."

They now explained, that since the day he had seen her last, she had never again returned. This he seemed scarcely to comprehend, for his mind began to wander ; they endeavoured to discover what he knew concerning the abduction of the child, but this was hopeless ; he sank

upon the pillow, and as in a dream he murmured, "and let—thine eyes—change—night to—day," he then drew one long deep breath, and he was dead.

"Bring yonder screen," said the merchant, "and place it before the couch."

Flora and the Bridge-shooter in doing this, revealed to the eyes of Hewet, the portrait of his beloved Alyce, which Osborne had hid there, instead of destroying it. The moment the merchant saw that sweet face, he rushed towards it and kissed it madly. But now, instead of the revelation made by the murdered knight, clearing up the mystery concerning Alyce and the child, that mystery seemed to become more and more profound. In proportion as the heart of the merchant had been relieved by what he had just heard, the heavier grew the pain of his bereavement. She was innocent, but she was gone. What might not be her fate—her sufferings? and his child too!—They were lost in a sea of conjectures, when suddenly a messenger came hurrying in, from the mother of the Bridge-shooter to Edward Osborne, praying of him for his life to hasten to the Convent of the Minorics—to take with him her son, or any trusty friend; but on his life not to neglect her bidding, for there was one who would require all his assistance.

The old woman had kept to herself, that it was the Cripple who stood in need of aid; so her son, thinking there might be something of real moment hidden beneath her words, prayed of the merchant to accompany them—"For," as he said, "who knows, but mother at last may turn out a witch in reality; that cross, and the blind girl meant something, you may depend."

Hewet had other reasons for wishing to go to the Convent; his was a wish to make an offering of thanksgiving, in the shape of a rich present at the altar.

Flora, who wouldn't, no, not for a wedding-ring even, remain at home in the house of death now it had become night, seized hold of the Bridge-shooter's arm, and insisted upon going too.

Before they arrived there, a strange scene had been enacted. Horton, armed, as he thought, with full authority, had had the hardihood again to face the insulted Abbess; but here he found a head older, and more subtle than his own; she well knew the game that he would play, and therefore laid her plans to thwart him, and this she did in a way that at once should crush his pride, and satisfy her feelings of revenge. Had he conjured from the depths of the darkest regions an enemy, he could not have found one more to be feared than the Abbess of St. Clair. She knew that she could not shut her doors against the King's Commissioners, so she had shut the doors against his hopes.

Horton had come to take away the blind girl, Eoline:—"You take her hence, you!" said the Abbess; "and pray who may you be, possessing such mighty power? A slave of the court, an oppressor of the weak, I know you to be; but strong as you think yourself, that poor blind child shall laugh your threats to scorn."

"You ask me who I am—you know it well!" said Horton. "You ask me my power over Eoline—you know that too! Who else has power, if I have it not?"

"He's here!" replied the Abbess, as the Cripple entered.

"He!" said Horton with a sneer, "why, 'tis the Cripple of the Bridge—what power has he?"

"The strongest of all!" replied the Abbess, "the power of a husband! Ha, ha! you are foiled; Eoline is now the Cripple's wife. Take her, Cripple, take her and all she does, or may possess. You may frown and look big," she said, addressing Horton, "but what I do, I do strongly. You may as well endeavour to part the world in two, as part that man from his lawful wife."

How long this scene would have lasted, we know not, but it was suddenly put a stop to, by the nuns running in, shrieking in wild alarm: the Convent was on fire. All was now confusion and dismay, the bell was rung, the people from the farm came quickly to their aid; the night being dark, the flames told those far off the destruction that was going on. Horton, laughing at their distress, left them to their fates.

He had scarcely gone, when the merchant and those of his household arrived. Here were some carrying the rich furniture of the chapel, and placing it upon the grass; the nuns surrounded it, and falling upon their knees, sung a prayer to Heaven to befriend them: the scene was strange, but picturesque and awful, for the flames kept rapidly gaining strength. All the nuns, and indeed every inmate of the place was mustered, and their names called over, to see that none were left in the burning pile; they now remembered the two poor old bed-ridden sisters of St. Clair, who had hitherto been forgotten; they inhabited the upper story of the Convent, to which the flames were fast approaching. Who dared attempt to save them? All stood aloof. No! the Cripple and the Bridge-shooter both rushed into the burning pile; it was a dreadful moment of suspense; the fire roared more fiercely; the timbers cracking, sent up showers of sparks high into the air.

Distant bells were now heard ringing at the various religious houses round about, and soon troops of monks and villagers came thronging in. Eoline, who was clinging to the merchant Hewet, suddenly uttered a shriek, and said to him in accents made scarcely audible by horror—"There is one they have forgotten yet, the mad girl in the vaults beneath; in Heaven's name attempt to save her! The way is intricate and dark, but I can lead you there, for darkness has no power over the blind; come, for the love of Heaven, come!" She hurried along, holding the hand of the merchant, whose humanity would have prompted him to the bold attempt alone, and save her from the hazard of death, but he knew not how to find the spot without her help. As they entered the vaults, they heard loud shouts that the poor old nuns were rescued.

The Cripple now ran about frantic, for Eoline was nowhere to be found. So great had been the consternation and confusion, that both she and the merchant had not been perceived taking the way they had. The Cripple was obliged to be secured by force, or he had again rushed into the flames—he fancied he heard the voice of Eoline calling upon him for help.

While this scene was going on before the burning Convent, the merchant and the blind girl were threading their way through long passages

beneath, in which the air now became intolerably oppressive, from the increasing heat. The merchant could not help feeling a thrill of horror at their situation ; if he let go the poor girl's hand, or she were to faint, all hope must vanish ; the place was dark as the grave, and they had wound first one way then another, so that to retrace his steps unguided were impossible.

"We are near the spot now," she said, as they reached a door, which, to her horror, she found was locked. "Oh, all is lost !" she said ; "the door of this passage is fastened ; unless you have strength to break it down, the poor mad creature must be burnt alive."

The merchant exerted again and again all his strength, but in vain ; a last effort more violent from despair, and the shattered door flew in a hundred pieces before them. Eoline once more took his hand, and on they went anew. "'Tis here !" she said, unbolting a door ; "her's is a silent madness ; she never speaks ; feel for her where she lies ; take her in your arms, she will not resist."

The merchant entered the cell, and feeling his way round by the walls, had nearly made the circuit of the place, when his foot was stayed by something lying on the ground ; he stooped, and found it was a human being.

"Quick, quick, bring her forth !" said Eoline ; "take her in your arms, and I will, by your cloak, lead you hence : we must be quick ! on, on !"

Hope reanimated them, and they hurried forward, for the merchant now had confidence in the power of his guide. He had nearly dropped his precious load, and fallen headlong down, for he stumbled over the fragments of the shattered door. As they approached the longed-for egress from this dismal place, the noise and confusion without became more distinct ; at last they saw the opening at the end of the passage : one moment more and they were safe.

The Cripple who thought at that time of no one but his Eoline, flew to her, and danced about as though he had been mad.

The merchant had gone forward to deposit his charge in safety, further from the burning Convent. Presently all turned to where he stood, for with a frantic cry he called to all around. "Oh, Heavens !" he exclaimed, "see, here ! see, here ! it is an angel that I am pressing to my heart. It is my Alyce—it is my wife !"

CHAPTER XIII.

Nor of her daughter not a word spake she.

CHAUCER.

It was no time for explanation ; nor, indeed, did the merchant for an instant think of aught but of his own happiness in once more pressing his dear Alyce to his heart. How she came to be in such a strange place as the cell of the Convent, or why she had been only known as the mad girl, at that time never crossed his mind ; he only saw, he only felt, that his beloved wife was again restored to his heart, and that was all-in-all to him. As crowds of apprentices, and others, had arrived from the city, an attempt to extinguish the flames was commenced, very different to that which the drones in monkish hoods had as yet pursued, for all they had done was to walk in procession round the burning edifice, chanting prayers, but never once appearing to think that manual exertion was quite as likely to prove efficacious, as their mumbling of Latin verses, of which many of them were far too ignorant even to comprehend the meaning. Buckets and tubs, handed from one to the other by a whole line of apprentices, reaching from the Convent to a neighbouring pond, soon served to bring sufficient water to combat, and at last to overcome the raging flames.

How differently were the minds of those present now at work. Here might be seen a poor bigotted nun on her knees, offering up thanks for the miraculous manner in which she had been permitted, at the hazard of her life, to rescue from destruction about two inches of the decayed back-bone of a saint somebody, who had been principally revered because he had lived for forty years without the comfort of a single ablution ; there was the master of the farm, calculating in his own mind the increase of trouble and expense in providing lodgings and board for the nuns at the farm ; the apprentices' minds were full of the fun of throwing as much water over one another as they did over the flames. The Cripple thought only of his Eoline. Flora's mind was divided between joy and wonder at the restoration of her mistress, and anxiety for the safety of the Bridge-shooter, who was foremost at every point of danger in his endeavours to extinguish the fire of the Convent. The merchant had but one hope, that of conveying his Alyce in safety to his home. When the Convent began to assume the appearance of a blackened ruined mass, and fears of further danger seemed to have vanished, all present began to reflect more coolly upon what was next to be done, in the way of providing accommodation for the houseless nuns, and their own arrangements for the night. The Abbess and her flock made the best shift they could at the farm, the labourers of which continued for the rest of the night to watch the ruins, and wherever a thicker smoke arose, as if from a hidden fire beneath, to throw water upon the smouldering embers. It was settled that the Cripple should conduct his beautiful blind wife

to the cottage of the Bridge-shooter's mother, where she should for the present take up her regular abode.

A litter, borne by two horses, was soon provided, in which Alyce was placed, and with Osborne on one side, and the merchant on the other, Hewet holding his wife's hand in his own, they took their way towards the Bridge. Flora and the Bridge-shooter had hurried on before to make all ready for the reception of the merchant's wife. As the litter was passing through the dark postern gate of the city, the horses had nearly ridden over a man who came on hurrying from the opposite direction; he appeared hastening towards the Convent. So completely had his fright, caused by the horses, thrown him off his guard, that he uttered a dreadful oath, in a violent tone of voice, at the sound of which the whole party recognised him as being the saintly Father Brassinjaw. At the same time a slight shriek came from the litter, and Alyce murmured, "Oh, save me! save me!" Hewet thought no more of the priest, who had hurried by, but pressed his wife's hand fervently to his lips, as if to tell her, by that kiss, how safe she was with those about her. These words were the first Alyce had yet uttered, and immediately they had died upon her lips, she appeared to sink again into her former hopeless state of imbecility. When they arrived at the merchant's house, a little incident occurred, which caused the blood in Hewet's heart to swell it almost to bursting; this was, as he was entering the room, bearing his wife in his arms, his eye fell upon her picture, which Flora and the Bridge-shooter had restored to its former position. A thousand feelings rushed upon his mind at once; the order he had given for its destruction—the unhallowed thoughts with which he had hastened to far-off lands—and then came the bitterest reflection of all, that now, although his wife was restored to him pure and innocent, where was his child? Alas! not there to welcome the return of its poor, afflicted, adoring mother. So completely had all memory vanished from the mind of Alyce, that when they seated her in her own accustomed spot, she looked around so vacantly, that it was evident all her eyes beheld brought back no recollections of the past. She regarded her husband with the same indifference as she looked upon Edward or on Flora. There was a slight smile for a single moment passed over her pale, but lovely features, when Juno, her favourite dog, came bounding in, and flying upon her lap, licked her hands in kindness, then barking loudly, as though to wake her from her trance, flew wildly here and there, then rolled himself upon his back, and gazed up in her face, as praying to be noticed. Shortly afterwards Alyce was conveyed to her sleeping apartment, and scarcely had her head sunk upon the pillow, ere she was lost in a profound slumber. The merchant, who had been seated watching by the side of her couch, now offered up to Heaven a sincere thanksgiving for the restoration of his beloved wife, and a prayer, equally fervent, that his child might soon be discovered, and once more bless his arms. Having fulfilled these duties, he joined the other inmates of his dwelling, who were busily conversing upon the strangeness of all the incidents of that day. But how to account for the merchant's wife being found in such a place as a cell in the Convent of the Minories, and in such a pitiable condition, as that in which she had been discovered, passed all their ingenuity to imagine. "No doubt," said

the merchant, "all will be explained by the superior of the Convent, and, indeed, it must and shall be. Strange things are being brought to light concerning the evil practices of nearly every religious house in the land; and if there be aught here of villany that has been employed against my Alyce, my life and wealth shall both be sacrificed but I will bring the guilty to severest punishment. But it were useless now to conjecture; in the morning I will to the nunnery, when all shall be made clear." The rest, thinking with the merchant, that for the moment it would be of no avail to endeavour further to solve the mystery, they had all risen for the purpose of retiring to rest, when they were startled by hearing a violent cry of horror—so suddenly, so unexpectedly, the frightful shriek struck upon the ear, that for a moment they stood as if spell-bound. They all turned towards the room in which Alyce lay; but the sound had not proceeded from that direction.

Before we enter upon the cause of their alarm, we must follow the footsteps of the saintly Father Brassinjaw, who, the reader will recollect, passed the merchant and his party as they were entering the city by the postern gate. He was then hurrying from the Cardinal's Hat, upon the Bridge, where he had but just ensconced himself comfortably behind a flagon of Romney sack, and was listening to a delightful dispute between the three loving friends, Catchemayde, Checklocke, and Silkworm, concerning which of the three was of most importance, the bowyer, the shaft-head maker, or the stringer? "Why, the bowyer, of course," said Catchemayde, standing up as usual for his own craft; "a bow, mark me, is like a human body, and, if so, I pray thee what would be the use of the head or the sinews, if one lacketh the back-bone?" Catchemayde here looked wondrous wise, as if he had accomplished a figure of speech of uncommon beauty, and had started a proposition of unanswerable logic. For ourselves, we see neither the logic nor the beauty; but those whom he addressed, seemed to think the allegory well deserving to be answered in a similar strain of figurative reasoning, for Silkworm replied—

"But thy back-bone, as thou callest the bow-staff, would avail thee nought, but for the strings, or sinews, as I call them, to bend it to thy will."

"Nor either do much service," said Checklocke, "but for the sharp head to direct the aim; and my heads are sharp enough to strike conviction into the thickest skull in Christendom. I'll warrant them to penetrate an inch board at eight hundred feet."

"If shot from one of my bows," replied Catchemayde.

"And that bow strung by me," retorted Silkworm.

"And the arrow-shaft boiled, pared, and feathered by your humble servant," said a sharp-nosed little man, an arrow-maker. "It's my opinion, neighbours," he continued, "that more depends upon the straightness of the arrow-shaft and the goose's feathers, than all your handy-works together. An arrow of an ounce weight, well mounted with two equal feathers, plucked from the white wing of a gander of two years old, and one from a goose that's brown or gray, to mark the proper placing of the arrow, will—will—will——"

"Wilt thou hold thy peace?" interrupted Father Brassinjaw. "Cease this senseless jargon of thy trades, shake hands in amity, for if

but one of ye lend not the others aid, believe me, we shall see no more victories like Cressy, Agincourt, or Poitiers—you four must never quarrel, or woe to the land we live in. All England's greatness owe we to the bow and arrow; and to whom, I pray ye, do we owe the arrow or the bow? Why, to you four combined, do we not? So come, shake hands, and I'll join ye in the *drinking* of another bowl."

This well-timed flattery produced an instantaneous effect, and a shumping bowl was about to be ordered, when mine host entering, announced that the sky had become suddenly illumined by a raging conflagration somewhere by the Minories.

"The Minories!" exclaimed Father Brassinjaw, rising; but waiting not the answer, he hurried away himself to learn the truth. Most or the other visitors of the Cardinal's Hat followed his example; the rest ascended to the roof of the house, whence a distant view of the destruction going on could be observed. Father Brassinjaw had not proceeded far before his worst fears were confirmed; so, pushing on more rapidly, he soon reached the postern gate, where, as we have before stated, he had nearly been trampled under the feet of the horses that were carrying the litter in which lay Alyce Hewet. So anxious was he to reach the Convent, that he did not perceive whom he had then passed, but uttering the oath before-mentioned, and accelerating his speed almost into a run, he continued his road to the nunnery. When arrived there, and with a glance seeing the vast destruction that had so quickly been consummated, he made no stay to ask particulars, but learning that the Abbess was in safety at the farm, he was soon there too, and in the presence of the superior of the nuns of St. Clair. "Sad work, this, holy sister," he said, puffing and blowing, and in a tone made almost inaudible from want of breath; "but deeply as I was buried in my devotions on the Bridge, I lost not a moment in flying—I speak metaphorically, for, woe's me! I'm but an indifferent figure for such aerial exercises—yes, in flying to your assistance, and now with my prayers——"

"Prayers!" ejaculated the Abbess, with an expression of utter contempt, and with a look as black as night. "Prayers—thy prayers, indeed!"

"Oh, ay—yes, yes"—replied the saintly father; "I see, I see we are alone; I had forgotten that; so we may both throw off our masks. But in the name of all the saints that ever, and never, were, why that frown? Sister, thy face looks as black as the burnt beams of yonder Convent?"

"Have I not ample cause to look black," replied the Abbess, "and blackest of all at thee? Is not the very roof of my house now smouldering in the ruins of the lowest vaults? but that is a trifle, which a slight manœuvring that we well understand, would raise again higher and firmer than ever: but you have brought upon us a trouble that may not only remove the roof from over our heads, but the very foundations from beneath our feet."

"What means my gentle Savage?" inquired Brassinjaw.

The Father did not place his words thus as a jest, or insult—the Abbess's name was really Savage. Elizabeth Savage was the last superior of the nuns of St. Clair, at the Convent of the Minorresses—hence our

Minories. And it was this same Elizabeth Savage, who at the general suppression of the monasteries in 1539, surrendered the house of the "Poor Clares," as they were called, into the hands of Henry the Eighth, who was to allow her a small pension, which, we believe, like most others of the sort, was never paid.

"Not only Savage am I by name," she replied, "but savage thou shalt find me in my nature. And this is what I mean—you have deceived me—the mad girl in the cell——"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Brassinjaw, "I had forgotten her; the saints forbid that she be buried in the ruins! Speak quickly, is she safe?"

"Safer than we are," replied the Abbess; "and all through your deceiving me. Your hypocrisy is so consummate, and, from habit, so essential to your very breathing, that methinks you'd die outright, were it but for one moment taken from you. Why not have told me who and what she was?"

"And how know you now her name, or state?" said Brassinjaw, somewhat alarmed.

"I know them both from one that cannot be deceived—her husband."

"Hewet!" exclaimed the saintly Father.

"He has been here," and found his wife confined as a lunatic in our cells beneath the Convent. You must account for this; I cannot, nor will I jeopardise myself or my nuns in screening you. The King lacks not the will, but a pretext for ruining us all—you have placed one in his hands. The merchant, they tell me, too, is now in favour with the Queen, because he seeks out costly baubles to feed her vanity. She is no favourer of our creed, and will, to serve her handsome merchant, work on the King to our undoing. You have raised up a pretty enemy, in truth."

"Then you must raise a prettier friend to answer it," replied Brassinjaw; "I mean, young Horton."

"Horton!" exclaimed the Abbess. "Your blind folly makes me laugh with scorn. Do you so soon forget the hand we both have had in the marriage of Eoline with the Cripple of the Bridge? A likely friend, forsooth, we may look for in Harry Horton, the minion of our deadliest foe, the accursed Cromwell."

"Sister," said Brassinjaw, "it is useless to lose our time in reviling each other. You have a strong brain, stronger than mine, I know. I therefore at once throw myself humbly on thy mercy. If you assist him not, by your superior wisdom, poor Father Brassinjaw is lost for ever."

The hypocrite knew, that let a woman be a saint or sinner, a leader in the vanities of the outward world, or humble servant of some secluded shrine, the way for man to conquer, is by absolute submission. The moment the Abbess found she had no obstacle to combat, her mind took a totally new turn. "If you would have me advise you," she said, "in this woful strait you have brought upon yourself, speak for once openly and with truth. I know the difficult task I am imposing upon you; but those who are learned in the healing art, cannot administer remedies

with success, unless they first be made aware of the full extent and causes of the disease they are called to conquer. Firstly, answer me, what made you bring the woman here?"

"The hope of gain," he replied, unhesitatingly.

"Your answer carries truth with it in every word," said the Abbess; "but how did you seek to accomplish the end in view? Tell me all and every thing. I cannot give you absolution, nor even promise hope, unless your confession be full and ample."

"It shall be," said Father Brassinjaw, who felt that it would be a difficult task to rescue himself from the dilemma into which chance circumstances had thrown him, unless aided by the good service of the Abbess of St. Clair. From what he now disclosed, it appeared he had received from Sir Filbut Fussy several large sums of money for the revelation of confessions which Alyce, as the reader may guess, had never made. These, he said, he took care to shape in such a manner, that Sir Filbut's vanity and hopes were fed at every word. Brassinjaw finding that the more flattering to his dupe he made these mock confessions, the greater was his own reward, framed them so extravagantly, that Sir Filbut, believing his power over Alyce had now become absolute, determined at once to fly with her. He wrote the letter, which was afterwards found by Flora, torn and burnt; and Horton being absent with the merchant at Hampton Court, he insisted upon Brassinjaw delivering it to the lovely Alyce. This he undertook to do, without ever intending to fulfil his promise. His plan was to destroy the letter, and then trump up any tale he found most applicable to the circumstances, to account for Alyce's non-compliance with its ardent prayer. Fate, however, was at work to bring all these vile schemes to a climax and an end; for it so happened, that Sir Filbut insisted upon accompanying the saintly Father almost to the door of the merchant's dwelling, as he bided him on his promised mission; and then, with impatient anxiety, awaited the return of Brassinjaw with the hoped for reply. This was hurrying matters to a conclusion with a precipitation little expected by the priest; but finding all remonstrance unavailing, he repaired to the dwelling of the unconscious victim on the Bridge, where, making some frivolous excuse for his untimely visit, not that any was required by Alyce, who, in her religious views, was a bigot in the fullest sense of the word, and regarded all her confessor advanced as sentences of holy inspiration, he left her, and returning to the expectant Sir Filbut, delivered a most impassioned reply, promising that the lovely Alyce would be at the spot appointed. To this spot it was Brassinjaw's intention to go instead, as if sent by Alyce, with an excuse for the unavoidable disappointment. Thus then they parted; the one to make his ultimate arrangements for his intended flight, the other to count his gains, and laugh at the credulity of his wealthy dupe. When at his lodging, comfortably seated before a rich repast, the priest bethought himself of a little amusement, in reading over the undelivered letter of Sir Filbut, when, thrusting his hand into the bosom of his vest, he was somewhat surprised to find it not there; but recollecting that he had placed it between the leaves of his breviary, that he usually carried under his arm, he took it up, but although he examined it leaf by leaf, no letter could he find. He rated himself

soundly for his own carelessness; but there being no help for the mishap, he consoled himself with an extra glass or two of Rhenish wine, and soon forgot his vexation in sleep. The letter had fallen from the book upon the floor of Alyce's apartment, and, as the reader is aware, was there found by her. When the appointed hour had arrived, the affairs of his chapel on the Bridge caused him for a time to delay his meeting with Sir Filbut; at last he started to the trysting-place, when what was his surprise to see in the distance Alyce weeping, and at her feet Sir Filbut Fussus. Almost at the same instant the knight arose, and hurried from the place; and then had Brassinjaw, bursting with rage, for he believed he had himself been duped by Alyce, approached her, and sent forth such a volley of holy denunciations, and appalling anathemas against her for her deceit, that the poor simple-minded creature fell at his feet in a deadly swoon, as he was declaring he saw behind her the Evil Fiend, standing ready to bear away her guilty soul.

"I thought," said Brassinjaw to the Abbess, "this fainting was but one of your sex's often-repeated tricks to disarm us men of our anger, so I heeded not her death-like trance, but waited patiently her own pleasure to recover; when she did, I renewed my maledictions. She protested her innocence of knowing aught she had not already confessed, which really was nothing. But I still believed myself deceived; the more so, as I told her, on account of my having met a strange woman with her child, who when questioned whither she was taking it, replied, 'to its mother.' This alarmed her greatly, but, as I thought, only because I had discovered her intent; so, as a last resource to drive her to divulge all, I enjoined her our severest penance. Your Convent being close at hand, I led her hither; you had been absent for some weeks, nor were you soon expected to return. I placed her, unseen, in the secret apparition bell, telling her that if she kept back but a single word, or refused to confess what she had done with the child, the fiend would ere long appear before her eyes. I left her there for some hours alone in utter darkness; when I thought her mind was wrought up by terror to the proper pitch, I then, by the magic lantern's aid, first caused a speck of light to appear upon the wall of the cell. I listened, and could hear her teeth chattering with fear. 'Oh, save me! save me!' she exclaimed; but when I caused the spectre to start suddenly into gigantic form, she uttered one fearful cry, and fell as if dead upon the floor. I now found I had miscalculated the strength of the mind upon which I had been working; and yet I should have known it, for Dame Alyce has been in my leading strings for this many a year; but my rage and passion blinded me. An ague fit was on her frame, a stupor appeared to have seized upon every fibre of her brain; kindness, nor threats, could force her to utter a single word, excepting 'Save me, save me!' This she ever repeats upon hearing my voice, after having uttered a wild and fearful scream. Eoline alone knew of her being here, until your return, and fully believes the tale she told to you, that it was some poor demented thing that I had found wandering about homeless and friendless. The truth is, I had now involved myself in a labyrinth of perplexities, from which I knew not how to extricate myself, so that day by day slipped by without my being

able to determine upon what course to steer my way. You now know all. Advise, and I will follow your advice, be it what it may."

"Had you told me all this before," said the Abbess, "how much anxiety you might have saved yourself. I see no difficulty in the case at all; keep your own counsel, know nothing of what has transpired, and leave the rest to me. But remember, my house is in ruins, and must be rebuilt; you may guess my meaning. Your attempt at deceiving me must and shall be paid for. Sir Filbut's gold will shine as brightly in my chapel as in yours."

Father Brassinjaw vowed by every saint he could bring to memory, how liberal he intended to be; and so finding his fears greatly diminished by the promised assistance of the Abbess, he took his leave, and feeling, as he very often did, in want of a little stimulant to support his weary spirit, he determined to solace himself for one hour more in the lower room of the Cardinal's Hat, where for the present we must leave him, and return to Harry Horton, who, upon quitting the burning Convent, joined his companion in iniquity, Beltham Spikely, to whom he related how completely he had been toiled by the scheming Abbess or St. Clair. "All I pray the fiends to grant," said Horton, "is that she and all her crew may be burnt to cinders ere the morning. The only difficulty I had to surmount to reach wealth and distinction, was the proof of that girl's existence or of her certain death; and now to have found her thus unexpectedly, and then to have the whole game torn from my hands, and given to that degraded being, the Cripple of the Bridge, is maddening. But I will thwart them yet, with all their cunning. Although the estates are lost to me for ever, I still possess documents without which she can never prove her title, and those shall be this night destroyed. At least I'll be revenged, if not enriched."

"Where are they?" enquired Spikely.

"Still in the merchant's house, sewn in the sacking of my bed. Not wanting them before, and having had enough of other affairs to think upon of late, I had in truth forgotten them entirely. But as the night is dark, and the merchant abroad, I can once more safely mount to my old dormitory from the sterling of the Bridge, and, unknown to any one, bring away not merely those papers, but the rich diamond and the letters of the fool——"

"Why do you tremble?" exclaimed Spikely, as he felt Horton's hand convulsively seize upon his arm, as if to steady himself.

"Have we not both cause to tremble?" was Horton's reply, uttered almost in a whisper; "have we not both cause to tremble after this morning's work? How could he have escaped from the vessel? But fate had doomed him to fall; and that was why we met him so unexpectedly in the wood. But I wish his blood had not been spilt by us."

"By you, you mean," said Spikely, coolly. "I had no hand in his death, further than when I saw him coming, just pointing out that if he were allowed to blab, not even Cromwell's power could save your own neck. But fear nothing; thanks to my precaution in rifling the body of every valuable upon it, suspicion will at once fall upon your common cutthroats, who, it is well known, would kill a dozen men for a dozen

gold nobles. Depend upon it, when the body shall be found, which may not be yet for many a day, it will end exactly as I have foretold."

"Heaven grant it may!" said Horton, attempting to cross himself. "It is the first blood I have ever shed, and at certain moments my eyes seem swimming in it, and I feel like a——"

"Coward!" said Spikely, with a sneer.

"Coward, I am none," replied Horton; "and that, even you may one day learn, if you chafe me thus. Let us in here," he continued, as they were passing a wine shop; "the cold has seized upon my heart." They entered, and Horton took two whole glasses of strong spirits, which for a time seemed to renew the powers of both mind and body. "How's the tide now?" he inquired of the helper.

"It's at the flood," was the reply.

"Then let us take boat directly," said Horton to his companion; "we can safely remain beneath the Bridge at this part of the tide, and need not enter the Cardinal's Hat. I'd rather not be seen near the place at all to-night."

The night was very dark, which favoured Horton's plan. When they had entered beneath the sixth arch, they tied the boat to a ring in the pier, and having found the well-known secreted rope, which still remained in its old place, Horton, with all the dexterity attainable by long practice, mounted speedily towards the little window of his former sleeping room. He was soon within the apartment, and having provided himself with a dark lantern, he gazed around. All seemed just as he had left it. "Spikely is right," he said, "I am a coward, or why should I tremble now? I know not why, and yet my nerves are all quivering. Let me be quick; where is my knife?" He drew from its scabbard a blade which answered the purposes of knife or dagger, which slipping from his hand, fell and stuck upright in the floor; by accident his foot kicked sharply against it, when the blade snapped in two, leaving a portion still in the ground; as he stooped to seize the handle, he had nearly fallen, for the steel was covered with blood. "I—I—I'll tear the sacking open," he said; "that dagger must be used no more, the Thames shall bury it for ever from man's sight." He flung it from the window, then hurriedly approaching the bed, he threw off the coverlid, when his eyes seemed blasted by the horrid spectre he there beheld—it was the dead body of the very man he had that morning slain! The cry or horror that he now uttered was the one which had so startled the merchant and those above. Horton knew not where he was, his brain seemed suddenly on fire; he flew to the casement, and seizing the rope, flung himself headlong forth, his body dashed against the pier, and he fell stunned into the boat. Spikely comprehended in an instant that some untoward circumstance had taken place, so slipping the rope from the ring, he pulled with all his might through the Bridge towards Westminster. So severe had been the fall, that it was some length of time ere Horton recovered sufficiently to relate what he had seen; but to account for the appearance of the dead knight in such a place he found impossible, unless, indeed, he chose to allow his reason to be led captive by the superstition of the times, and believe at once that he had witnessed an apparition

sent from another world. Spikely scouted such childish thoughts, and undertook himself to discover the right solution of this ghostly riddle.

When the merchant and those with him had recovered from the surprise into which Horton's cry had for a moment thrown them, they felt convinced that the sound had proceeded from the chamber into which the Bridge-shooter had had the body of the knight removed, on account of the expected return of the merchant and his beloved Alyce. The Bridge-shooter, taking up a lamp, was about to hasten to the room of death, when Flora screamed with fright at the thought of her William placing himself in such danger; the truth was, Flora had at once made up her mind that the horrid shriek had been uttered by the unhappy spirit of the murdered knight, and she thought it a tempting of fate to interfere in any way further than telling her beads, and running over a hundred or two prayers for the soul of poor Sir Filbut, whom she was sure was then suffering the pains of purgatory. The rest having different ideas upon the subject, left her trembling where she stood, and hurried to Horton's room. Here they, for some time, were at a loss how to explain what they had heard, until, perceiving that the coverlid had been removed from off the body, which the Bridge-shooter declared he had himself carefully placed over it, they were convinced that some mortal hand had been employed; and of this they were soon made certain, by discovering the dark lantern which Horton in his fright had let fall. The window, too, was open; so they at once made up their minds that another attempt to rob the house had been meditated, and that, in all probability, the unexpected finding of the murdered knight had so alarmed the thief, that being taken off his guard, he had uttered the ejaculation they had heard, and consequently felt it necessary for his own safety to make a precipitate retreat. The window was soon strongly secured, and the whole dwelling having been strictly searched, even Flora retired to rest with a tolerable feeling of security.

The investigation which took place concerning the death of Sir Filbut Fussy, ended exactly as had been predicted by Spikely. The absence of every valuable from the body of Sir Filbut was deemed proof conclusive that he had met with his death at the hands of common robbers. The Abbess had, also, proved a correct prophetess, for the tale she told met with perfect credence from the merchant, the only person who had a right, or felt any inclination, to enter upon the subject. Indeed, so plausibly had the Abbess framed her tale, that the merchant not only thanked her in words for her care of his afflicted wife, but bestowed a large sum towards the rebuilding of the part of the Convent which had been destroyed. The mind of Alyce, which appeared to be paralyzed, showed no symptoms of recovery; her whole day was ever passed in silence. The only slight alteration which took place in the expression of her eyes, was upon the approach of her dog, who never seemed happy but when lying at his mistress' feet.

Horton, finding it would be impossible to dissolve the marriage between Eoline and the Cripple of the Bridge, consented to desist from further persecution, upon condition that the Abbess still kept fast his secret.

This she undertook to do ; Horton promising to protect her and her nuns against the powers that were now rising up against them.

Having brought this epoch of our tale to a conclusion, we must here give our pen a rest, and for a few years bid farewell to all our friends on OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

CHAPTER XIV.

With mother's pity in her breast enclosed,
She goeth, as she were half out of her mind.
To every place where she hath supposed
By likelihood her little child to find.

CHAUCEUR.

NEVER had the sun been known to shine more brightly, nor the sky to look clearer or screener, than it did towards the latter end of August, 1539. Could it have been the beauty of the day, for fine weather ever has a powerful influence upon the spirits of poor mortals, or some other cause, which had thrown the inhabitants of Old London Bridge into such a happy vein ? No doubt the glorious sun had its usual share in adding to the delight felt upon this occasion ; but there was a second, and a most powerful reason for being merry, which we shall very soon explain. There was one odd circumstance about the doings of the good folks of the Bridge, which to a stranger would have conveyed the idea that the whole of the inhabitants were, in a body, about to emigrate. Not a door was to be seen without a cart, or truck, or porter, standing near it, each being loaded with the various articles brought from the different shops ; but, perhaps, from none came forth greater quantities, nor more valuable commodities, than issued out of the dwelling of Master William Hewet, cloth-worker and merchant. The fact is, the 24th of August was near, and whom, we should like to know, was there then living in London, not aware that that day was the one dedicated to St. Bartholomew ? Now, it so happened, that some good four hundred years before our tale began, a certain King Henry the First, of England, had a certain jester, named Rahere. Rahere thinking he could do something better for himself than to be laughed at all his life, turned monk, and built a most magnificent priory with other people's money. The King gave him the ground, which at that time was a most unpromising spot on one side of Smithfield, the only dry part of which is said to have been ornamented by a gallows, on which thieves were hanged. - But a few *pretended* miracles soon produced a real one ; for we find that, ere long, this penniless monk managed to raise a structure which, for grandeur and riches, could be surpassed but by few in all the land. This magnificent edifice he dedicated to St. Bartholomew. Every privilege the King could bestow upon this Priory, he did bestow, and many indeed were the privileges a crowned head then possessed ; some of them have odd-sounding names to our modern ears, such as soccage and saccage, and thol and theme, and infangtheof, fordwit, hengwit, ward-penny, aye-penny, bloodwite, fightwite, and childwite, thring-penny, manbratre, and mischinige, schewinge, frith-

soke, and westgeilteof, not forgetting forefenge and whitfonge! All taxes were remitted, for, strange as it may appear, the monks in their days disliked paying taxes quite as much as the laity does in our own.

Now, there was another peculiarity about the monks of old, and that was, that whilst there was a chance of getting anything more, they were never satisfied with what they had; so the Prior of St. Bartholomew, being perfectly aware that the greater the number of persons he could get to visit the Monastery on St. Bartholomew's day, the more would his shrine be loaded by offerings, hit upon the expedient of asking from the King the permission to establish a FAIR in and about his holy dwelling. The grant was obtained from Henry the Second, and thus was established the well-known Bartholomew, or, as it is vulgarly called, Bartlemy Fair, which continued to be holden for more than seven hundred years; indeed, until within these last few years.

A fair in the olden time was a very different thing to that which the present generation has witnessed. Now, it is a mere collection of gingerbread stalls, and here and there a locomotive playhouse; but some hundred years ago, a great portion of the mercantile wealth of the kingdom found its way, *en gros*, or, as we should say now, *wholesale*, to these receptacles of every useful article, and thence was distributed in small parcels, *or retail*, east, west, north, and south. The two main objects of this fair, after the one of bringing crowds to the shrine of St. Bartholomew, were for the collection and disposal of woollen cloths and cattle. The first grant was for three days—the eve of the Saint's day, the day itself, and the morrow; but, notwithstanding all the efforts made by the city authorities, for the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs possessed great power over this fair, the worthy traders and showmen found so much profit, and the citizens so much amusement, and pleasant opportunities for spending their money, that the three days were soon extended to fourteen.

As nearly all the clothworkers and drapers of the kingdom congregated at Bartlemy Fair, it was but natural to suppose that one of the principal shearmen, as clothworkers were called, until joined to the trade or mystery of the fullers, which happened in 1528, such an one as honest Master William Hewet, would not be found wanting; consequently, we find the largest stall or standing in the Churchyard of the Priory, adorned not only by that worthy name, but also by the identical sign of the Golden Fleece and the Bag of Wool, which had been brought from the merchant's house on the Bridge, and fixed over his stall. This was done to show the country trader that it was the same honest merchant and no impostor, who now offered to their notice his costly wares.

Having said thus much as a sort of preface to the fair, the reader will no longer wonder what could have been the cause of such a seeming general removal from Old London Bridge. Masters Catchemayde, Silkworm, Checklocke, and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, had entered into partnership, and built a stall with four sides, so that their four several trades, or mysteries, were combined under one roof, and yet kept separate.

So extensive had Bartlemy Fair become at the period of which we are

writing, that it stood in no less than four parishes—Christ Church, Great St. Bartholomew, Little St. Bartholomew, and St. Sepulchre's. Busy indeed were all the traders of London, as well as those of the Bridge, removing their most tempting commodities to their stalls in Smithfield. The artists and picture-dealers hurried towards the cloisters of Christ Church, for these were the galleries appropriated to the pictorial exhibition. Several times, during the day we are speaking of, had the Bridge been completely choked up by the numberless shows, each professing, by external decoration, that that one was the greatest wonder in the whole world. On they passed, and on posted multitudes of country people, all laden with baskets filled with butter, cheese, fruits, and poultry; but the last was a rare and dear article; but then it was coming to a market where there would be plenty of rich customers, so it was sure to be disposed of. A few droves of cattle, too, wended their way across the Bridge; but the greater portion of this sort of merchandise came from the north, so the Bridge was not greatly troubled by them.

A little incident occurred exactly opposite the merchant's dwelling, which raised the Bridge-shooter's indignation; but being alone in charge of the house, he could not leave it to interfere. This was, that as one of the most splendidly-adorned caravans was passing the Golden Fleece, on which was written in letters of gold, "THE GREATEST WONDERS IN THE WORLD! The Real WOOD-MONSTER and the INFANT VENUS," a violent-screaming of a girl who was suffering from blows that could be distinctly heard, issued from the said caravan; and these words were uttered by the woman who might be supposed to be inflicting the chastisement:—"I'll teach you, you blue-eyed minx, to look out of the window: who do you think will pay to see your ugly face, if you show it for nothing?" Then came more abuse, more blows, and more screaming, as the caravan passed on its way towards the fair.

All this happened on the day previous to the eve of St. Bartholomew's day. Just before twelve o'clock at night, crowds of the lower orders hastened towards Cloth Fair, a name that has descended to our own time, and may be found attached to a very dirty little street, or lane, adjacent to Bartholomew Close, for here it was that as the hour struck which killed the night and straight gave birth to a new-born day, out rushed from a house of entertainment a number of tailors, shears in hand; the leader, addressing the crowd, proclaimed the opening of the fair. Having done this, the whole party of tailors snapped their shears, and with a loud shout retraced their steps to the drinking-house. The rabble, also shouting, now scampered off towards Smithfield, knocking and ringing at every house door in their road, to the great discomfiture and alarm of the sober-minded inmates. When arrived in Smithfield, here the rabble in their turn proclaimed the fair duly opened, and then passed several hours in riot and disorder. The lawful proclamation did not take place until the afternoon, and this was done with much state and splendour, according to the following order:—

"The Aldermen meete the Lord Maior and the Sheriffes at the Guildhall Chappel, at two of the clocke after dinner, having on their *violet* gowns lined, and their horses, but, without their cloakes, and there they heare evening prayer. Which being done, they mount on their horses, and

riding to Newgate, ¹ passe forth of the gate. Then entering into the Cloth-fayre, there they make a proclamation, which proclamation being ended, they ride thorow the Cloth-fayre, and so returne backe againe thorow the Churchyard of great Saint Bartholomewes to Aldersgate: and then ride home againe to the Lord Maior's house."

The proclamation above referred to was read by the Lord Mayor's attorney, at the great gate going into Cloth Fair, Smithfield, and commanded that "all persons, of whatsoever estate, degree, or condition they be, should keep the peace of their sovereign Lord the King;" and then forbade any one from selling "wine, ale, or beer, but in measures ensealed, as by gallon, pottle, quart, or pint, upon pain that will fall thereof." No bread was to be sold, but such as was "good and wholesome for Man's Body." No cook, pie-maker, nor huckster, was to sell any "victual, unless it be good and wholesome for Man's Body," &c. &c. &c.; and concluded by informing all who might feel aggrieved during the continuance of the fair, they could meet with redress at the Court of Pie Powder." This was a temporary court of record, properly then called *Pepoudres*, or *Pedes Pulverisati*, meaning that justice was there as quickly done, as dust can fly from the feet. The proclamation being ended, the fair began in right earnest. Every conceivable voice that the ingenuity of man, woman, or child could invent, was brought into requisition. Gongs, cymbals, trumpets, drums, whistles, rattles, bawlings, cryings, screamings, laughings, shoutings, all burst forth, as if let loose by the spell of silence being broken by the cessation of the proclamation. The whole space of Smithfield was surrounded, first by a row of small stalls, filled with thousands of various articles; here a line of jewellers' stalls, there a row of those appropriated to toys for children. Cake stalls were innumerable—but oh, what a glorious sight was to be witnessed at Pasty-nooke, or Pie-corner! It was there you could find at one view some hundreds of smoking, savoury-smelling, little roasted pigs—always hot, always ready, always delicious, and always disappearing into stomachs whose dimensions seemed to increase upon every coming mouthful. It was at this corner that the great fire of London terminated; and some of the very houses which witnessed the preparation of these delicious little pigs, were standing within these last forty years.

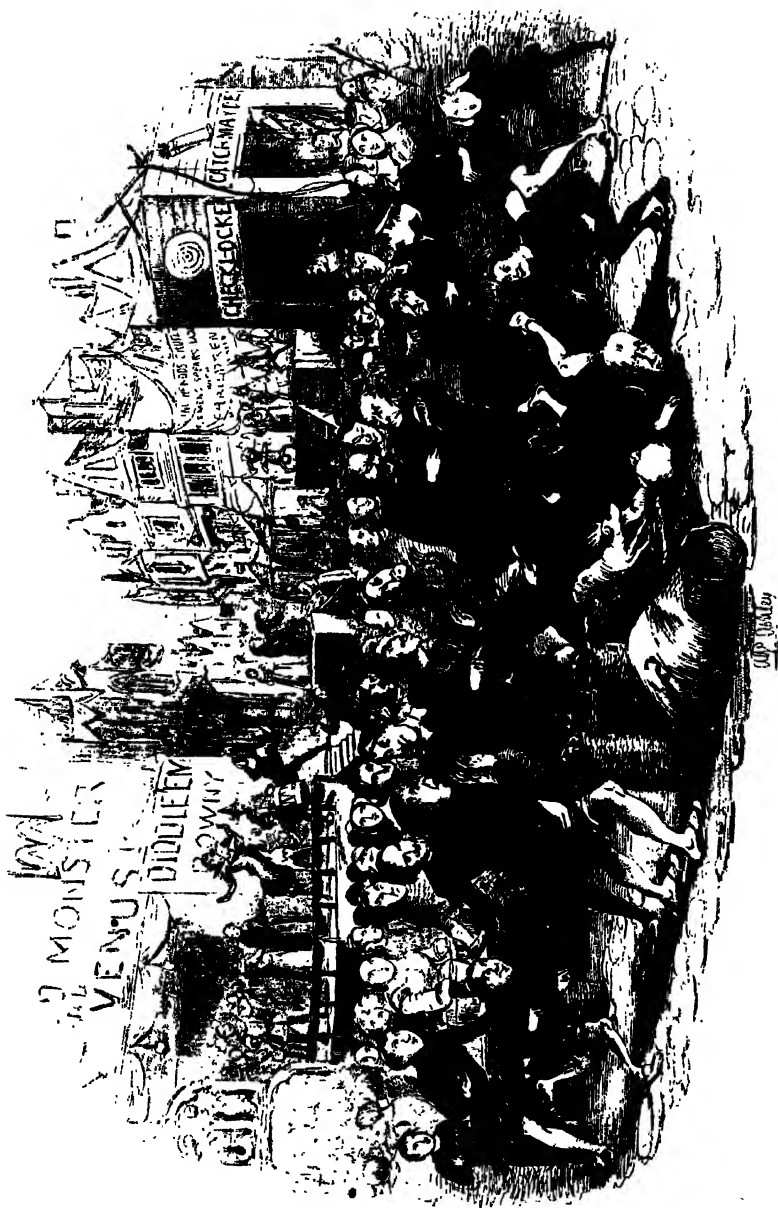
At the backs of these smaller stalls stood the grand exhibitions and shows, their fronts towards the open space of Smithfield cattle market; but the cattle caused but little inconvenience to the gay throng, for he it remembered that much less meat was consumed at that time, for London was then not quite so big as it is at this day, and Smithfield was a great deal bigger. It may not be out of place here to mention, that the term "Smithfield" comes not, as many have supposed, from the name of Smith, but is really a corruption of "SMOOTH-FIELD," that place having been kept as smooth as possible, on account of the jousts and tournaments and other exhibitions requiring a clear smooth field of action. Many of the shows would, in these our days, produce an odd effect—for instance, a representation of the "Old Creation of the World new Revived, containing the creation of Adam and Eve; the intrigues of Lucifer in the garden of Eden; King Herod's cruelty, *his men's spears laden with children*; Rich Dives in hell, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom;"

mixed up with "figures dancing jigs, sarabands, antics and country dances, with Spendall and Punchinello;" an odd mixture of subjects for a show at a fair. But the monks of old had prepared the public for such sights in their churches, so they were now looked upon as matters of course everywhere, and relished highly. A live hare beating a tabour while standing on his hinder legs, was a favourite exhibition, and remained so for many hundreds of years; as did the same thing we see at this day in the streets, namely, a man throwing up three or four balls, and as many knives, and catching them in all manner of directions.

Edward Osborne and his master were too busily employed in the close-yard of the Priory, attending to their numerous country connection, who came now to lay in their stock of goods for the ensuing year, to take much notice of the fooleries of the outward fair. Not so Flora Gray and the Bridge-shooter; their very hearts, as much as love had left them of such commodities, seemed wrapped up in the delights of Bartlemy Fair. Every moment they could spare was devoted to that fascinating spot; and as the only pleasure the afflicted Alyce seemed to feel, was that of wandering about, Flora made the amusement of her mistress a sort of innocent excuse for being out in the fair from morning till night. Alyce's fancy, as well as they could guess from the very few words she ever spoke, was that her's was a body walking the earth without a soul, but that her soul would again be her own, if she could but discover something that was lost. What that something might be, no persuasion on their parts could ever tempt her to name; if they tried to lead her to that subject, she would invariably place her finger upon her lip, and smiling for a moment, sink suddenly into a deep reverie, and mutter to herself, "Oh, my poor lost soul! but time—time—time; yes, it shall yet be found." Then for hours after not a syllable would pass her lips. She never appeared to have the least command over her memory. The names of all around her she knew, but invariably applied them to the wrong persons. Often would she address Edward as though he were her husband, and speak of her husband by the name of Horton. It was strange, but there were three names she never uttered—those of her child, Sir Milbut, and the saintly Father Brassinjaw. Once, the good merchant, thinking that perhaps the pious converse of the priest of St. Thomas of the Bridge, much as he himself disliked him, might bring comfort to his adored wife, pressed Father Brassinjaw to try his power. The priest would have gladly been excused, but not being able to form any plausible excuse, reluctantly attended. The moment he appeared before Alyce, and she caught the sound of his voice, she was seized with raging madness, rushed into the darkest corner of the room, and there crouched down, trembling in every limb, and exclaiming that the fiend who had her soul was still standing behind her. This had occurred soon after her restoration to her home, and having been tried a second time with exactly similar effects, the experiment was never again repeated. She, after a time, became again composed, but never ceased to be, as it were, searching for something she had lost. When she fancied she was perfectly alone and unseen, then she would steal about on tiptoe, and look into every corner of the place. Nothing that she could open was left unexamined. At the slightest sound, she would hurry back to her seat, and

smile with delight at having, as she seemed to imagine, cheated those who would keep her from finding what she desired. The fair gave her great happiness, for here there was an endless opportunity of searching. The good merchant, seeing this, gave Flora ample means to gratify his Alyce, who, protected by the Bridge-shooter, passed her whole time there. At night she would return home worn out with fatigue, but the fatigue always produced a sound sleep, which appeared to benefit her strength of body, if not her mind. Every morning she was the first ready to sally forth on her beloved search. One day, towards the close of the fair, they were stopped by a crowd, dragging along some one towards the Court of the Pye Powder, to answer for an alleged impropriety of conduct, and whom should this turn out to be but our friend, the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower. The Bridge-shooter, seeing him in custody, could not think of leaving a friend in such a plight; so quitting Alyce and Flora for a time, he accompanied the Cripple to the Court. It appeared that the complainant was the manager of the exhibition of the "REAL WOOD MONSTER and the INFANT VENUS;" and as the Wood Monster (so ran the man's account) had the night before over-eaten himself, at his evening repast of sawdust and the bark of trees (the real truth was, the man had been so dead drunk, that he was scarcely living at that moment) he could not appear before the public. In order that his audience should have a monster of some sort, he had applied to the Cripple of the Bridge to come and act for a day or two at an enormous salary; but this offer had so insulted the Cripple, that he at once broke the head of the complainant, and would, in all likelihood, have murdered him outright, had the crowd not interfered. Now, the Court of the Pye Powder, as we have before remarked, made short work or justice, so at once fined the poor fellow with the broken head, for daring to insult any one holding an official situation. The man with the broken head could not quite understand the justness of this decision, but well knowing how useless remonstrance would prove, and might very likely add the stocks to his other sufferings, paid the fine and left the Court, rubbing his head and grumbling like a bear.

After the Bridge-shooter had left Flora, she led her mistress, who was as docile as an infant, towards the very show of the Monster and the Venus. Here Alyce gazed with childish delight at the gay dresses of the paraders in front of the show, and Flora was debating in her own mind which exhibition she should patronise first, that which gave her mistress such pleasure, or the next one, into which crowds were flocking. The show next to the Monster was a most extraordinary one to be at a fair, and one that could never have been thought of but in this year of the persecution of all the religious orders in the kingdom. The exterior of the building was painted to represent a monastery, and here, it was announced, a "mystery" would be enacted by "real monks and real nuns," showing the world how jollily they used to live before their houses were suppressed, and explaining all the deceits they had practised to delude the world." Such extraordinary stories had been told of late, for the purpose of setting the public against the poor nuns and monks, that this novel speculation proved an enormous "hit." These poor creatures had been doubtless what they professed, for at this time



thousands of the various orders were wandering about in a state of abject want and starvation, so that a designing speculator need not have looked far to have found as many as ever he might have required. At this moment, Edward Osborne happened to pass, and stopped for an instant to gaze with sorrow upon his dear mistress, who was quite absorbed with the gay sights she beheld. She took no notice of Edward, but exclaimed, "There, there," and pointed towards a man who now advanced to the front of the Monster show. This man was splendidly dressed in green velvet and gold; and on his head he wore a richly trimmed hat, with a superb and lofty plume of feathers; his face was tolerably handsome, what with the paint upon his cheeks, and the neatly trimmed beard, and elegant moustache. He was just about to address the crowd, when a clown, jumping upon his shoulders, popped his hand before his mouth—this caused a roar of laughter; as this told so admirably with the audience, it was repeated several times; at last as the people appeared to cease laughing, the clown, the last time he jumped up, tumbled over the head of the gentleman in green, and in doing so, caught hold of his beard and moustache, and pulled them off; then ran about, pursued by the gentleman, who ordered the clown to be placed in the stocks at the end of the platform, and then began to re-adjust his beard, &c., amidst the laughter of the people.

While he was doing this, young Osborne said to Flora, "It's very strange, but that face, without the beard, reminds me strongly of one I have seen before, but where, or when, or under what circumstances, I cannot bring to mind; but I am certain we have met before." The gentleman in green and gold, having replaced his moustache, began to address the company. The moment the moustache and beard were on, the resemblance which had appeared to Osborne, vanished; so, advising Flora not to go to the exhibition of the nuns, but rather to enter the one before them, he pursued his way to rejoin his master at his stall in the Priory Churchyard.

The man in green said, "My right worshipful and dearly-beloved friends, on most occasions, when I come forward to proclaim a disappointment, I do it with exquisite pain; but now I do so with unutterable delight, because the disappointment will be no disappointment, but a wonderful gain to you. You are doubtless fully aware of the unlooked-for misfortune that has befallen the greatest wonder in the world—the REAL WOOD MONSTER? But I see you are, so I will touch upon that painful subject no further, but tell you what I have done for you. When your pleasures are in the scale, what care I for trouble—what care I for money? I would starve rather than you, my patrons, should be disappointed; so I have engaged—ha! ha! ha! he! he! he!"—here he pretended to go into a most violent fit of laughter—"oh, dear! oh, dear! how can I pronounce that wonderful name! But it must out—yes, it must out, though I burst in the effort"—here he once more pretended to become speechless from laughing, and did it so well, that the laugh became infectious, and an universal roar was the consequence; then wiping the tears from his eyes, the man in green and gold went on—"Yes, I have engaged him; I have, indeed; but my mouth is too small to pronounce so great a name. Oh, ye spirits of magic, that obey

my commands, aid me—aid me!" The words were scarcely uttered, when a gigantic placard flew up to the top of the show; and on it appeared the words DIDDLE'EM DOWNY!!! Never, during the present fair, had been heard such a shout of applause and laughter as this placard produced. The man in green proved himself green in nothing but his dress, for he had been working up to this point to introduce his newly engaged "star"; so, now the enthusiasm seeming to be at the highest, up crew a canvass curtain, and sure enough, there was the far-famed "DIDDLE'EM DOWNY," seated upon his travelling jackass. Need we say that the roar and applause now became redoubled, or that the steps were instantly besieged by crowds of anxious people, ready to pay their last penny rather than not witness the performance of one of whom fame spoke so highly?

This Diddle'em Downy was, in truth, no other than our old acquaintance Knowy, the flying newsman. It may be remembered that poor Knowy had, when we last saw him, entered upon the SCANDAL TRADE, which, like most scandal merchants, he found, for a time, a very lucrative employment; but by degrees becoming bolder and bolder, he began to take liberties with those who not only had the will, but the power to resent his insults; so that scarcely a week passed without witnessing Master Knowy in the stocks, or with his back as black as his own ink, from sundry good cudgellings. Now, this he might have put up with, for what will not those scamps, we mean all who live by pandering to the vilest feelings of their readers, not do for money? But Knowy, on one unlucky day, happening to touch upon the irregularities of his Grace the King, found himself whipped within, we may say, *half* an inch of his life, at the cart's tail, and the pleasing intimation given to him, that if he meddled with scandal again, he would discover a cravat round his neck, that he would find rather difficult to untie; so he determined to alter his course of life, and thenceforth became a celebrated comic singer. He had been fortunate enough to make an enormous hit, with the first song he wrote and sang; he henceforward was known only by the name mentioned in that song; and as this ditty was called "London Rogueries, or the Life and Adventures of Diddle'em Downy," we may presume that of many of the rogueries therein rehearsed, he could vouch for the truth, for we suspect he had been the principal actor himself.

So widely had the fame of this song, "Diddle'em Downy," flown, that the arrival in Bartlemy Fair of the celebrated singer thereof, was hailed with acclamations. He knew full well that a little eccentricity in any way, always has a powerful effect in fixing the remembrance of any one, in others minds, so he invariably travelled upon an ass; wore a coat of a fashion quite his own, which was profusely ornamented with imitation gold and jewels; but the greatest point of attraction, was his originality in wearing a blue wig, with a pink tail! This was, doubtless, intended as a satire upon the introduction of wigs; for this article of adornment, which, in the time of the Charleses, became universal, was unknown in England until the reign of Henry the Eighth. The curtain was allowed to remain up but a very few minutes, for the sight of such a brilliant star as Diddle'em Downy, was not to be viewed for nothing.

Bong-gingle—bong-gingle—bong-gingle went the gong and cymbals,

trumpets sounded, fifes played; the man in green and gold walked proudly backwards and forwards, flourishing a long cane, and ever and anon pointed with exultation up to the placard; then placing his hand to the side of his mouth bawled out, in a voice that seemed to be passing from a throat lined with sand-paper—"Just going to begin! just going to begin! all in! all in! all in!"—The clown was released from the stocks—the band of musicians vanished through a slit in the canvass—the man in green and gold heading his troop of actors, passed once along the platform in great state, and then entered the show through another slit in the canvass—the clown was the last, who, pretending to cry bitterly, swore to the people that he was now utterly ruined, for his master had found a greater fool than himself.

So great had been the rush, that the common expedient of making two or three false entries, as if "going to begin," in order to tempt the audience to enter, was not called into requisition; for indeed, the master of the show soon discovered, that the more frequently he could really begin, the more considerable would be his gains.

It was not to be expected that Flora Gray should resist the temptation of taking her mistress into such a delightful show. Alyce appeared very pleased at being taken in, as indeed she did to any new place. As they entered there were two money-takers, one on each side of the opening—a woman sat in one box, a man in the other; there being less crowd at the man's side than at the opposite, they here paid their money for two of the highest priced seats, and soon found themselves comfortably seated, to witness the wonderful performance of Diddle 'em Downy, and the no less extraordinary, but certainly more classical representation, of the rising of Venus from the sea, and her adornment by the three graces.

The entertainment began with a "motion" performed by puppets; puppet-shows were called motions, representing Noah's Ark, the flood, the rising sun, and the sinking of the waters; this was an every day sort of exhibition, so elicited but slight applause, as did the clown's dance upon his own head; no, no, Diddle 'em was the attraction in the comic line, the Venus in that of beauty.

At last Diddle 'em Downy appeared; but here our pen blushes at its own want of power to express even in a faint degree, the wonderful performance. What words have ever been found to give any just idea of the peculiar excellence of a Betterton, a Garrick, a Liston, or a Kean? No! an actor's genius cannot be set down in words; the wonderful expression of the eye, the varied intonation of the voice—the features' electric movement, speaking without a tongue—are things that must be seen or heard, to be comprehended. If this be the case, it were useless to attempt a description of Downy's excellence. It is true, that we could say, how at the end of every verse he twisted his celebrated wig into a new position; but what position? there's the point—what position! Any one could twist a wig, but no one could twist a wig as Downy did. Another misfortune under which we labour, is to find that his celebrated song was never printed; and although we have searched through every MS. in the British Museum, as well as in more than one foreign library—for Downy's fame, and himself too, visited foreign parts (ill-natured people say at the government expence), we have never been able to meet

with it. All we know is, and this is merely traditional, that each verse expressed a peculiar roguery, and ended with these emphatic words—

“ * * * be they black, white, fair, or brown,
And tho’ they got up with the lark in the morn,
Yet none could be up to Di dle ‘em Downy.”

and then, as was usual with ancient lyric poetry, the words were repeated again and again—

“ Diddle ‘em Downy, Diddle ‘em Downy—
None could be up to Diddle ‘em Downy.”

Three times was the song called for, and three times did Downy vary the Rogueries, until the hearers began to think that the world was made of nothing else.

After a pause, to allow the audience to sober down their feelings, slow sweet music was heard, and again drew aside the curtain. All the platform, or stage, appeared in mist, but this gradually cleared away, and discovered the representation of a calm sunlit sea. Presently, and this part was very ingeniously contrived, dolphins and sea Gods rose from the waves, and swam about to the great solace and delight of the audience. So beautiful was all this preparation, that the beholders naturally expected the appearance of Venus to out-do all they had yet seen; and so it did; for now a splendid shell began to rise, all glittering with gold, silver, and pearls, in which stood the youthful Venus, attended by the Graces.

The girl who personated the Goddess of Beauty, was famed for the splendour of her hair, so in order to show that off to the greatest advantage, she first appeared with it in loose ringlets, so luxuriant in their growth, that they completely covered her whole figure, lower than her waist.

Poor Alyce gazed at this scene with almost conscious interest; her eyes were riveted upon the beautiful vision. As the music played a soft and dulcet measure, the Graces throwing themselves into most picturesque and elegant attitudes, began to part the golden tresses to display the beautiful face of Venus. Flora was so taken up in watching the countenance of her mistress, whom she had never yet seen to evince such fixed attention upon any one thing, forgot for a moment all about the show; when suddenly Alyce uttered a shriek that paralyzed every heart, and then frantically exclaimed—“Saved, saved! my soul is saved!” and fell to the ground in a death-like swoon.

All was now consternation—the audience rose in alarm—the curtain was closed suddenly; so piercing had been the shriek of Alyce, that other ladies in their fright began to scream too, and some even fainted. The more brutal part of the assembly began to swear at having their enjoyment interrupted, and said it was “only Hewet’s mad wife at one of her freaks.”

As Alyce was being conveyed out, the woman from the money-box, came to offer her assistance, but the instant she met Flora’s eyes, she started back, and, after a moment’s hesitation, vanished through the

crowd. When they were in the open fair, Flora espied the Bridge-shooter searching for her; him she sent off to acquaint the merchant with what had taken place, and to beg of him to hasten to the Bridge. Alyce was soon conveyed home, where the merchant, with Edward and the Bridge-shooter had already arrived.

Alyce sat very still for a time, as if endeavouring to collect some wandering thoughts; she muttered "saved, saved! my soul is saved!" then she looked minutely at the features of every one present, examining them again and again; then she passed her fair hand, in the manner of a blind person, gently over the face of her husband, as if to ascertain whether he were a vision, or a corporeal being; when who can paint the feeling of rapture that flew through the merchant's heart, as he heard her, who, for so long had seemed walking the earth unconsciously, as in a living death, say, "William, I have found it, I have found it!"

The poor merchant feared to speak; he dreaded to break the spell, which seemed to make his Alyce thus conscious for a moment, that he was present. At last he said, "Dear Alyce, tell me, tell me, what it is you have been ever seeking, and now say you have found?"

"You know," she replied, smiling faintly, and then almost whispering she continued, "I have found the salvation of my soul?"

"In what?" exclaimed the merchant.

Alyce first looked up to heaven, then flinging her arms around his neck, and bursting into a violent flood of tears, exclaimed "My child, my child!"

Nature seemed by some powerful effort, suddenly to have burst the barriers, that had so long pent up in Alyce's breast those floods of the heart's relief; fit after fit of weeping followed each other, in an almost uninterrupted succession. The poor merchant's hopes again sank, as he fancied he heard but the outpourings of his wife's now hopeless madness.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Flora, "it may—it must be so. Master," she continued, "there is more than madness in her words. I believe, sincerely believe, that she *has* seen her child." Flora then explained to Master Hewet all that had passed at the fair; that being so intent upon watching her mistress, she had scarcely looked at the stage, but what confirmed her in her belief was, the woman whom she had seen at the doorway, and whom she now felt certain was the same who had stolen away the child.

Not a moment was to be lost. The Bridge-shooter, with Alice Vaughan, from the opposite dwelling, who had ever been most kind in her attentions to Alyce Hewet since her dreadful affliction, were left with the merchant's wife, while Hewet, with Flora and Edward Osborne, for Edward now said that he too had his suspicions that the mountebank in green and gold, would prove to be one of the wretches who had formerly attempted his murder, started again for the fair. As they went along they obtained the requisite assistance from the authorities, at the Court of Pye-Powder, to enable them to search the show for the lost child, and thus armed, they hastened to the booth.

When they arrived there, "Diddle' em Downy," was once more in the middle of his song, but seeing officers of justice coming on to the stage,

for reasons best known to Downy, he imagined that they could want no one but himself, so jumped into the middle of the pit, and escaped by the front of the show. When the woman wearing the dress as described by Flora was produced, great was her disappointment to find a person in no respect, but the dress, resembling the one who had taken the child. This she declared was not the woman she had before seen so recently, but in answer to this, everybody belonging to the booth swore that no other had taken money at the door that day, and indeed no other ever had. The girl, too, that was now brought forward, as the youthful Venus, was but very scantily entitled to bear the name; she was a rather plain bandy-legged girl, and much older than Anne could have been. The poor merchant's heart sank within his breast as he turned away. Edward Osborne was doomed, also, to disappointment, for the man in green and gold, when he had removed his moustache and beard, was very, very unlike what he had fancied him to be, when, as he supposed, he had last seen him.

They all returned in a most dejected state. The only one who seemed to feel happier at the events of the day, was Alyce. A wonderful change had taken place in her mind; which, although still unsettled and wandering, was less frequently entirely lost. There was evidently something in her own thoughts which brought a degree of comfort to her, and even the merchant could not quite banish the hope that still she might be restored to reason. It could not be denied that she now recognised every one who approached her; but could not be made to understand why they kept her child from her; formerly she had never named it, now she would scarcely speak of anything else. Once after a long silence she took them all by surprise, by saying, "How wonderful she is grown—and how beautiful she is—I wish she would come home."

The merchant gave up all hope of ever again seeing his child. Not so Flora; nothing, she declared, "should ever make her doubt her own eyes; that *was* the woman, she was certain; only, as they were conjurors, perhaps they had changed her for a time, but she should find her out yet—and her dear little Anne too, or there was no truth in dreams, or in cards neither."

The next day was the last of the fair, but Diddle 'em Downy having absconded from fear, and the lack of beauty in the Venus being blown, and for other reasons, easily to be guessed at, the monster show packed up all its goods and chattels, and that very day left the ground.

The merchant had been more than usually fortunate; what with sales and orders, this had proved the greatest year he had ever known; so while he is busily counting up his gains, and preparing for the next day's removal of the few remaining goods, not forgetting the celebrated sign of the Golden Fleece and Bag of Wool, we will introduce the reader to a new scene in man's chequered life.

CHAPTER XV.

O feigned woman ! all that may confound
Virtue and innocence, through thy malice
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice.—CHAUCER.

"I wish the devil had you, or you had longer legs; tramp on, I say! tramp, tramp!" This gentle exhortation was addressed to a poor child of some ten or twelve years of age, who was lagging behind a woman shabbily attired. This woman was rather past the middle age, but still retained the remains of much beauty, of the masculine kind; the girl appeared dejected, and from her limping gait, one might easily imagine her to be sadly fatigued, or that her naked feet were grievously pained by the sharp sand and stones of the ground over which she was travelling.

"Mother," said the girl, "I can't, indeed I can't walk faster, unless you let me have my shoes; my feet are bleeding now, and the stones are so sharp I can scarcely stand."

"Just now," replied the woman, "you said your shoes hurt you; you're always full of one fancy or the other: there, take 'em," she said brutally throwing them down right upon the feet of the girl, who cried out with pain as they struck against her ankles, "take 'em, and tramp on quickly, or I'll——"

"I will, I will!" replied the girl, rubbing the tears from her eyes with the back of one hand, as she hurriedly pulled on the shoes with the other, "I will try to do everything you wish, if you will but be kinder to me."

"Kinder indeed! a pretty deal I have to be kinder to you for," exclaimed the woman; "why, you've caused me more trouble, than all the six husbands I have had put together. One's generally trouble enough for a woman; but all mine, excepting the last, were what husbands ought to be, early croakers, and died off like gentlemen; no waiting to be told to go. I buried three in one year;" then speaking to herself, she said, "Bel's a tough 'un, but I shall see him out yet; it won't be long before he calls here, at the half-way-house to the other world." As she said this, she turned her head significantly towards a large venerable looking pile—it was the Hospital of St. Giles's in the Fields, where the condemned always took their last drink, on their way to execution at Tybourne.

It is strange to observe, how the march of refinement in London, has followed in the wake of the gallows. The elms, or gallows of Smithfield, was surrounded by all the pomp and grandeur of chivalry and regal state. As the gallows journeyed westward, and settled at St. Giles's, the court and high nobility travelled westward too; the last fixed home the gallows found was at Tybourne, and here, has now sprung up an extensive city, as we may say, literally formed of palaces. The gallows may at this instant be regarded as a homeless wanderer; true, it now and then peeps out at Newgate, but as if ashamed of its very self, it quickly vanishes again, and as its visits are now "few, and far between," let us

hope, ere long, to be able to view it only through the long glass of memory, and talk of it as one of the barbarous things that were.

Having passed the Hospital, or Religious house of St. Giles, the travellers soon found themselves in the way to Uxbridge, now called Oxford Street. Along the whole mile and a quarter, the length of this part of the road, there was not a house to be seen, with perhaps the exception of a hedge ale-house, for the accommodation of thieves, as much as for wayfarers. The road was but ill defined, for in many parts it was entirely open to the fields, so that in bad weather, when the part called the road became impassable, the horsemen and waggons turned into the fields and made a road for themselves.

The woman and the girl pursued their way until they arrived at a spot, fatal to many of their friends, the far-famed Tybourne Tree. Here stood, amongst others, one enormous tree, and near it the three-sided gallows. The woman looking up at it, said—"I could fill those three sides with jewels, that would hang there and be real ornaments to it; and perhaps I may yet, who knows?" It was an odd locality for such people to fix their camp in, but at some distance up the road, might be perceived through the trees, an old worn out caravan or two, that had seen better days, for on many parts small portions of gold still sparkled in the sun, and had evidently been most attractive-looking articles at fairs, many years before.

"I'm glad we're at home," said the woman, as they approached a very old man, who was sitting upon the steps of one of the vans enjoying the rays of the setting sun, who, starting at her voice, looked up, evidently astonished at seeing her.

"What in the name of all the saints has brought you here to-day?" he said; to which the woman replied—

"Rather enquire in the name of all the devils, for there's no good in our visit, I can tell you! it's all along with that girl there."

The girl looked at the woman imploringly, as if, although unconscious of having done anything wrong, she feared a severe chastisement.

"Don't stand looking like a fool," said the woman to the girl, "I'm too tired to beat you now: take off your shoes, there's no need of wearing expensive articles when there's nothing to be got by it, and then to your shed, and mind you go to sleep, for sleepers can do well enough without eating. The girl left them, and doing as she was told, crept into the little gipsy sort of tent, where she began to cry and bewail her wretched fate.

"But what's gone wrong?" said the old man; "I had not looked for you until to-morrow night at soonest."

"Plenty has gone wrong, but don't bother now," replied the woman; "get something to eat, for we've had a long walk, and a hot one."

The old man ascended into the room of the caravan, and soon returned with a couple of wooden trenchers, on which was some cold poultry, for, as they took it wherever they found it, it did not signify to them it being a dear commodity; this, added to a large flask of wine, made a tolerably tasty repast, and to it they both sat down upon the grass, and enjoyed it exceedingly. Being on an elevated part of the ground, their view extended a long way up the road towards London; the woman



The Meeting at Cyprien

casting a glance in that direction, rose from her seat, and placing her hand over her eyes to shelter them from the glare of the sun, exclaimed, "There is more wrong yet; for yonder I see one coming, who never to my knowledge, left his platter while there was anything to be scraped off it."

She was right, for presently afterwards that oddest of all odd figures, Downy, was seen approaching, riding upon his jackass. It being terribly warm, he was fanning himself with his hat, an odd shaped thing, something like the three cornered cocked hat of the last century; a feather stuck out horizontally from each point, and the sides were richly ornamented with gold studs; his head was quite bald, for he had removed his celebrated blue wig, which now dangled down, the pink tail being tied to one of the large gilt buttons of his coat. He soon related the cause of his flight, for which he got heartily laughed at, and the woman exclaimed, "Why, Downy, you are a greater coward than you are a rogue, and that's saying something. Why, man, it was not for you the search was made, but better birds; but they moulted their plumage, and the hawks were all at fault."

Diddle 'em Downy did not exactly understand the meaning of her words, but felt that he had not only disgraced his name by being done, but had by his precipitate retreat lost a good day's engagement. It was too late now to grumble, and he was ashamed to go back, so letting his lovely steed loose, he sat down and partook plentifully of the refreshments offered. They conversed for a time most affably upon the chances of success at the coming Uxbridge fair; and the woman, having plied Diddle 'em Downy plentifully with strong drinks, tried all her power of fascination and persuasion, to tempt him to break his engagement with their rival, with whom he was to perform at Uxbridge; but Downy for reasons best known to himself, and really to his own absolute astonishment, proved honest, and positively refused every offer the woman tendered, who, upon finding she could not make it worth her while, thought it useless to throw away her breath, so was henceforth silent.

Diddle 'em having got all he wanted, shut his eyes, and became as silent as herself; thus the three sat for some time, each absorbed by their own peculiar thoughts.

The sun had now descended below the horizon—the western sky was beginning to doff its splendid livery of red and gold, and assume a far more modest, but scarcely less lovely gear of grayish blue, studded with stars of silver. At every step the glorious sun preceded in his god-like march to drive night round the world, and shower his daily blessings on far distant climes; the timid moon came bolder forth; and then like a weak, but presumptuous queen, usurped for a brief space the throne of night. The last sounds of the feathered choir's evening hymn had died away; the little choristers had sought their leafy homes, and all around was still. At last the old man and his daughter, seeing that Downy had fallen fast asleep, and not caring for him further, arose and left him where he lay, and retired into the van.

It was sometime before Downy awoke; when he did, he turned himself over on his hands and knees, and then began to get up, somewhat

after the fashion of a cat, that is, he first bent his back into the segment of an arch. When he did get upon his legs, he shook himself once or twice, to call up the energies of his gigantic mind, then perceiving that his friends had deserted him, he determined to take advantage of the cool of the night, and the bright light of the harvest moon, to pursue his journey towards the next fair, which was to be at Uxbridge.

Amongst that class of persons there was no need of much ceremony, so without disturbing any one to bid them adieu, he caught his donkey, fastened the saddle upon its back, and then wrapping up his wig very carefully—for that wig he regarded as his greatest treasure—he tied a dirty kerchief over his head, and mounting his dapple steed, started at a moderate pace towards Uxbridge.

He had not been gone long before the woman, coming from the van, said, as she descended the steps—"Father, keep a look out till I return; I grow more anxious every minute. I'll walk and meet him—the Clipper's not the punctual chap he used to be; he's either got drunk, or there's more mischief in the wind." Having said this she sauntered along towards London, muttering all the way she went.

As her form vanished in the imperfect light of the moon, the girl crept from her tent, and having anxiously watched the woman's departure, approached the van, and ascending to the door, knocked gently, and whispered, "Grandfather, mother's gone." The door opened, and the old man appearing, said half kindly, half pettishly, "Child, child, you'll get me into sad trouble one of these days."

"Oh, Grandfather," replied the girl, "you are the only being on earth now, who is kind to me; and I am so hungry, mother has not given me a morsel to-day."

"Your mother says," replied the old man, "that if she overfeeds you she shall make you fat, and spoil your beauty."

"I often pray to heaven that I could myself spoil what you call my beauty, for then I think mother would turn me adrift, and—and—but I have my own thoughts what I would do then."

The old man not having attended to the latter part of the girl's words, he having turned into the caravan, made no remark upon what she had said, but bringing out some little dainty bits he had really kept aside purposely for her, unknown to any one, he said, smiling and kissing her with real kindness, "There, child, you see I had not forgotten you; come up and sit on the top step, and then we shall see more easily when your mother is returning."

The girl did not require to be told twice, so running up the steps and sitting down beside the old man, for a moment forgot all her troubles and seemed quite happy.

The old man watched the child with great attention, and sighing, said to himself, "Poor thing, were I not so old, so feeble, so dependent, you should not want a friend to save you; but were I to—they would murder me—no, no."

The girl having very speedily finished her meal, looked up in the old man's face with anxiety, and said, "Why are you so serious, grandfather? you are seldom thus when we are alone."

The old man, arousing himself from his thoughtful mood, replied, "Oh,

child, I fear there's plenty of cause for our all being serious—do you know what has happened?"

"All I know," said the girl, "is, that to-day just as I was being shown dressed in all my finery, as Venus, there was a frightful screaming in our booth, and such a confusion created, that the curtain was closed, and every one was running about in alarm. Presently, mother came hurrying up to me; she was biting her lips and looking as white as ashes, and taking hold of my clothes began to pull them off; she told Sarah, the tight rope girl, to put them on; and then she herself changed dresses with Slopsy Sal; and Ray, the Clipper, too, was at the same time slipping off his beautiful green and gold dress, in which he thinks he looks so fine, and as mother dragged me out the backway, I saw him putting the green and gold on ugly Tom. We hurried away on our road here, and that's all I know about it, grandfather—but there must be something wrong."

"There has been very little right, child, since the night you were brought to us. You have forgotten that time, I suppose?"

"No, no, no!" said the girl, beginning to cry bitterly; "I shall never, never, forget it. And oh, mother did beat me so, the other day; she beat me till she thought she had killed me, only because as we were coming from Rochester, I peeped from the window of the van, to try and see the house in which, when I was a very little child, I was so happy. Oh, grandfather, how cruel it was of that fine lady on the Bridge to turn me away, when she found her own child. She always told me I was her own, and I loved her as my life, and she used to say she loved me; and then there was the gentleman I called my father, I loved him too; and then there was Edward—oh, I shall die, grandfather, I shall die if I think of it."

The poor girl cast her head in despair upon the bosom of the old man, and wept as though her young heart were bursting. The old man wept too, and was working himself up to have courage to tell the child all he knew, when he saw his daughter returning. A word was enough to stop the child's tears, as if by a spell, and make her fly to her retreat beneath the shed, or rather the old covering of a tilt cart, that formed her tent, the old man at the same time retiring with equal precipitation into the van.

The woman came on in no very good humour; she mumbled, and grumbled, and growled, and then approached the girl's tent, into which she peeped; but the child was so far schooled in dissimulation, that the sleep she feigned quite satisfied the woman that she was safe and at rest. Presently she heard a sort of ploughman's whistle in the distance, and soon afterwards a countryman came jogging along the road; of him she asked if, as he had come that way, he had seen a man answering the description she gave him.

"What shou'd I want to see a mon for?" said the countryman; "I seed no mon, not hoiy!" and again beginning to whistle a rustic air, he moved on. He had scarcely gone a dozen paces, ere he turned round, and bursting into a loud laugh, called out, "What, Nan, girl—not know your Clipper?—then I must be well disguised, i' faith."

"Is it really you, Ray?" said the woman; "but I'd swear it was by that laugh. I think you would joke if you were going to be hanged, as old Sir

Thomas More did when he had his head cut off—but why this disguise ?”

“Why ? I should think you could guess. It wasn’t likely I should wish to be recognised by young Osborne as one of his dear friends of the marsh, was it ?”

Just as he had uttered these words, a very slight portion of the woollen covering of the gipsy tent, under which the girl lay, was slowly raised, the part was in the shade, but still something might be dimly perceived—the shadow of a face. It was the girl endeavouring to catch the words they spoke.

“There are not many out of our clan,” replied the woman, “you would like to be recognised by. But tell me how matters have sped since the morning—it was my anxiety about that which has kept me up here half the night.”

“Well, then, Nan, sit down here, and I can rest my back against this trunk of a tree ; for I’ve that to tell you that will take a little time.”

Between the spot where they then stood and the girl’s tent, lay the trunk of a large tree ; they both sat down upon the ground, and resting against it, were now very close to the spot whence the child was watching ; their backs being turned towards her, she listened in comparative safety. She had caught the name of Osborne, and her heart was throbbing with the thoughts of days now gone ; every succeeding word they uttered, created in her breast an interest more and more intense.

“Well, you know,” said Ray, “you were, as you always are, right to a tittle. You should have been a queen, Nan, for damn me, if any rascally ministers, or bamboozling ambassadors, would have thrown dust in your eyes.”

“Pshaw !” said the woman, in a tone of contempt, “go on !”

“Not an hour, not half an hour elapsed, before, sure enough, all the Hewets were upon us, armed to the teeth with law and mighty authority, as they thought it. I am not one to trust to others’ eyes, so had popped on this innocent disguise, that if they did come, as you said they would, I might look ’em boldly in the face, and see myself which way the cat might jump. Talking of jumping, you should have seen Downy jump off the stage, when he saw the officers—but of that anon. In came Master Hewet and Osborne, and their principal witness, as they thought her, that minx Flora Gray. I’ve marked her, for her share in the business, I can tell her. Oh, you would have split your sides, had you seen the falling of their chops, when bandy-legged Sarah, the rope girl, stood forth as Venus. Oh, it was a glorious lit of yours ; but I must own I did not feel very much flattered, when Osborne actually, as he looked at ugly Tom, in my green and gold, seemed to have great doubts whether that ugly rascal was not myself. Flora was the only one not easily to be done ; with half an eye she saw that Slopsy Sal was not my beautiful Nan ; and the go wouldn’t have ended as it did, had not all our troop, man, woman, and child, sworn her out of countenance : for better safety, I ordered the show to be struck at once—it will be here soon. But, Nan, although what is past may be a joke, what’s to come may not be one. I have seen *him* to-day, that I would I had never seen. I have seen your husband.”

“Spikely !” exclaimed the woman, in a whisper so low that the child

lost the sound, for she was really Beltham Spikely's wife ; " did he see you ?" she said in a louder tone.

" No, and I hope he never may ; the brute's like the dog in the manger ; he won't love you himself, and he won't let any one else do so for him. It's my belief that if he did not so thoroughly hate Hewet himself, and could fix the stealing of the child entirely on your shoulders, without confessing his own share as the planner of the scheme, he'd blow the whole affair to revenge himself on you. They tell me it was the child's real mother who screamed out so lustily, and had nearly ruined us all, but they believe her mad, so it may blow over, and we hear no more about it."

" We must have been mad ourselves, I think," said the woman, " to have gone so near the lion's den ; but who would have guessed that after so long a time, and under such circumstances, the girl Anne Hewet could have been recognised—a mother's eyes alone could have had the sharpness to penetrate such a blinding mist as we had thrown around her : but we must show her no more ; her beauty must be turned to a different account ; my uncle, the smuggler from Antwerp, is in the river ; he shall take her abroad ; she'll be worth her weight in gold there, and we be safer by her absence."

The distant jingling of bells was now heard, which put a stop to the discourse. Spikely's wife and her admirer rose, and looking in the direction whence the sound proceeded, saw, creeping slowly towards them the carts and vans containing the remainder of the troop and all their worldly treasures.

The first van was drawn by two old horses, whose noses hung down so near to the ground, that they seemed as if looking for something they had lost the last time they had been that way ; around their necks were hung a few cracked bells, no doubt to keep the poor old things awake. This was the van in which Anne Hewet had been so unmercifully beaten for endeavouring to look once more upon her former happy home. The man who walked at the side, with a large carter's whip over his shoulder, seemed almost as much asleep as the horses. This man was Ugly Tom, and ugly enough he certainly did look, now he had moulted the green and gold, and the beautiful plume of feathers. Behind him came a waggon containing all the poles, platforms and ropes, and enormous bundles of canvass, with which they constructed the principal building of their show. On the top of this sat Slopsy Sal, with her lovely family of six children, the oldest not being more than five years of age, seemed to indicate that four of them, in all probability, formed two pair of twins. There was no necessity to have bells to keep the horses of this waggon awake, for the unceasing crying of the children answered the purpose admirably. This waggon was conducted by one of the most miserable looking creatures ever seen—he did nothing but groan and sigh, and moan, and we might almost say weep. Now, who could this melancholy man be ? Who ? why, Master Merriman, the clown ! When the poor fellow's spirits had sunk quite down into his boots, the only way he could shake them up again, was by a little " ground and lofty tumbling ;" so whenever he found the tears coming into his eyes, he flung his heels up into the air, and walked alongside the waggon on his hands ; this always had the effect of throwing

his blood into such a charming glow, that he could be quite funny for at least ten minutes afterwards. The last vehicle was the one more richly laden than any, for in it was deposited the whole splendid wardrobe of the company, including the green and gold; but there were greater treasures in that four-wheeled cart than mere outward finery, for here reposed the beauties of the troop, the three graces, and Sarah, the bandy-legged tight rope dancer: there was one rather odd passenger in this cart, which, in a small degree, destroyed the elegance of the party, this passenger was a little donkey of about five weeks old; the fact was, this little donkey could not be trusted in the road, for it was always getting under the wheels, because it would not let its mother, a fine fat old jenny ass in the shafts, alone.

By the side, to use a modern technicality, walked the "walking gentleman" of the company; he was a youth, who would doubtless have been very handsome, but having fallen flat on his face when a baby, he now appeared to have no nose at all; his profile could therefore, not be regarded as quite perfect. This youth was about sixteen years of age, and about two yards and a quarter in length; he was the son of a deceased giant, but so miserably thin, that he went by the name of "Walking-stick." In their little ballets he always played the lover, and he was now playing it in earnest to Sarah. Sarah had just become wonderfully sentimental, and was whispering to her heart the very words that Shakspeare afterwards wrote, and took the credit for—she was just saying in her thoughts, that she "wished Heaven had made her *such a man*"—when, Master Merriman, who had been walking upon his hands further than usual, and was, thereby, thrown into unusually high spirits, destroyed all the romance, by calling out facetiously to her lover, "I say, Walking-stick, just lend me yourself to beat my horses with, for I have no whip."

Young Walking-stick would have turned his nose up at him, but for the accident we have before mentioned, so as he could not do that, instead of lending the clown himself, he was about to lend him a kick *par derrière*, but clowny was too much accustomed to practical jokes to be taken off his guard, so tossing his hand up behind him, he caught the heel of the young giant, who immediately found himself flat on his back.

Sarah screamed of course, and the graces said it was a *disgrace*; then Sarah protested that "if her lover did love her, he should shew his love by coming into the cart, for if he took the little donkey on his lap, there would be plenty of room;" this being done, and the clown sinking into his usual melancholy, they trudged on quietly enough, until they came to where they found their mistress and her admirer awaiting them.

Instead of pitching their tents for the night where they then were, it was thought advisable, in consequence of information brought by Ugly Tom, that they should, as speedily as possible, move as far as they could from the vicinity of London. All was now bustle and preparation for the continuance of their midnight journey. Young Walking-stick's legs being the longest in the company, he was sent off in quest of the blind mare; Master Merriman was employed in harnessing the mule that was to drag the tilt cart; and while this was doing, the remainder of the troop alighted for a while, just to stretch their limbs and take a sup.

The old blind mare being found, and attached to the sleeping van—all was ready, except the top being put to the cart.

"Come, Venus, jump up," said Ugly Tom, giving the tent a kick with his foot to wake her, "get up, or you'll perhaps have your beauty spoilt, by getting one of the ribs of the tilt stuck in your eye."

"And serve her right too," said one of the graces, who always thought she herself ought to have been the Venus. "If you stuck 'em in both her eyes it would be no great matter, for they are not much to boast of—they're not bigger than peas." Now the young lady who spoke, no doubt possessed eyes a little larger, her own being some trifle smaller than decent sized lemons—rather of their tint, too, and certainly looking quite as sour.

"Up with it," said Ray the Clipper, to the men who were holding the tilt ready to lift it, the moment the girl was from underneath, "up with it, and if she will keep her eyes shut, damn me, but I'll open 'em with a cut or two of this whip!" As he said these words he snatched the carter's whip from Ugly Tom. The men lifted the tilt, when to their utter amazement they found the girl was gone!

"What," exclaimed Nan, "gone, impossible!—I saw her lying there not an hour ago, sound asleep. Anne! Anne!" she called out, "hither instantly, or I'll flay you alive, if you come any of your tricks on me."

They all listened, but no sound fell upon their expectant ears. Now a general hunt began, for they thought she must be close at hand—but nowhere could they find her. Wider and wider became the circuit of their search. The moon's last rays had faded as the bright lamp of night sank majestically beneath the horizon.

Spikelcy's wife became more and more alarmed, for as the darkness increased, their powers to discover the lost one diminished; every lantern they could muster was brought into use, and strange indeed was the effect these flickering lights produced, as they were seen far and near, dancing about, as it were, like goblin spirits of the heath. Every tree and bush was examined, but all to no purpose. One by one they all returned with the same announcement of ill-success; the last who came in was the old man; he trembled from head to foot, and pale was his visage as he told them a rambling story about his having, he was sure, seen a ghost—he said, "he had strayed on and on, until he found himself standing exactly in the centre of the three-sided gallows at Tybourne Tree—it was there, while he stood trembling at the thoughts of the unhallowed spot he stood in, that he had seen a figure flit by, and vanish into the road that led to Edgware."

"Fool!" exclaimed his daughter, "you should have told us that at once—ghost indeed, it was the girl herself. Ray, mount and after her! if she escapes—but you know her value."

The Clipper and Ugly Tom took the two best horses of their stud, and mounting them, hurried away as fast as such steeds could carry them, diagonally across the country, so that by coming out some way up the Edgware-road, they might cut off her escape. No great kindness was evinced by either of the equestrians towards their poor beasts—no blow was hard enough—no oath was bad enough to be bestowed upon them.

After having split their hedge-sticks into shreds by beating the poor animals, and exhausting every oath their tongues could utter, they at last found themselves in the main way, or road; here they halted, when having taken a little breath, and allowed their panting steeds to do the like, they placed themselves on either side of the road, and then slowly and as quietly as they could, they crept along towards Tybourne, expecting every moment to meet the surprised and affrighted fugitive. Wherever they came to a bush or tree, they invariably passed behind it, in case the runaway might take alarm at the sound of their horses' feet, and hide herself till they had passed.

Careful as they were not to leave a chance neglected, still they proved unsuccessful; at one time they believed they had found the treasure they sought; they fancied they saw a female form approaching them; they placed themselves in the deepest shade, then pouncing upon the corner, frightened her into fits, for she thought them thieves; upon which they discovered her to be a poor old woman hurrying to the nearest village for a doctor to attend her dying daughter. Not a few oaths fell from off their tongues as they bade her go on her way. When they had come down the road as far as Tybourne Tree they again halted, uncertain what to do, neither of them liking to face the tigress, Nan, now they had proved unsuccessful.—“I wish the fiends had swallowed the girl,” said Ray, savagely, “before she had found her way among us: I was ever against it.”

“Against what?” enquired ugly Tom; “there’s always been some mystery hanging about that girl, that makes one more than half suspect she’s not Nan’s child at all. Come Ray, speak out; isn’t she the merchant’s daughter? you can surely trust Tom Blink-the-gulls, or the devil’s in it. Come, tell us who, and what she is?”

“Ask Nan yourself,” replied the Clipper, who, we may here mention, gained that honourable title in consequence of his wonderful dexterity at clipping the strings by which the pouches, or pendant pockets were hung at people’s sides; the more common name was “cut-purse;” from this distinguished stock has descended our modern pickpockets. “Ask Nan yourself, an’ you dare!”

“Yes!” said the other, “and be answered by her teeth instead of her tongue. Not I, i’ faith.”

They stood beneath the tree for a few minutes; and looked around as far as the darkness of the night or rather morning would allow, and then, with reluctant steps, made their way to their companions.

Nan and the Clipper went some distance from the rest, and argued the best course to pursue. As the girl knew their intention to visit Uxbridge Fair, it was settled, that they should immediately alter their rout, and push on to St. Albans in the way to Dunstable, and so on by short journeys, exhibiting a day here, and a day there, till up the time until the great fair at Bedford. The instant the plan was determined upon, the whole camp, as it might be called, broke up, and forming the line, began to retrace their way to Tybourne Tree, round which they passed, and turning sharply to the left, entered the Edgware Road, where we will now leave them to pursue their weary way.

CHAPTER XVI.

Joy of this world for time will not abide ;
From day to night it changeth as the tide.

CHAUCER.

EXACTLY at the time we are writing of, there were two men, the one in London, the other in Westminster, whose minds were equally torn to shreds by perplexities and doubts, as to what would be the best, that is the most agreeable, manner in which they should each employ his future life ; both were now their own masters ; both had the world before them ; both had a peculiar love for *self*—the one was King Henry the Eighth, the other the Saintly Father Brassinjaw.

Henry was at this time confined to his palace by growing infirmities, occasioned by an unconquerable ulcerous disease, which gave him ample time, but not much temper, for reflection. Brassinjaw, in like manner, had equal time, and quite as little temper, for reflection, by being confined in the cage on London Bridge. This cage was a sort of sentry-box-shaped building, near one of the archways on the Bridge, close to an opening that looked upon the water ; by it stood the stocks—there was no door to the cage, but a large cross of wood stood in the way. The cage being elevated upon several stone steps,* the passers-by had a good view of the prisoners within, and the prisoners within had a good bantering from the people without.

Henry, who was now so corpulent, that obesity became quite a fashion, was reclining upon a low couch, supported by cushions of amber satin, listening to his favourite, Cromwell, as he descanted upon two of the most pleasing subjects that ever fell upon the ear of Henry the Eighth—**MONEY and MARRIAGE.**

With respect to the first of these, he was relating with what success his two commissioners, Spikely and Horton, had assisted in despoiling the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury ; two immense coffers had been filled with gold and jewels, each of them so heavy that it took no less than eight strong men to lift.

It is notorious that Henry was a great stickler for the *forms* of law, so before he would have the name of Thomas à Becket degraded from the list of Saints, the great lawyers of the day were compelled to enact the childish farce of citing à Becket, who had been dead some four hundred years, to appear in court, and answer to the charges contained in a criminal information that had been filed against him. Having waited with due solemnity for thirty days, to allow the poor Saint time to travel from wherever he might happen to be, and he not then appearing, sentence was pronounced, that Thomas à Becket was guilty of "rebellion, treason, and contumacy," and all the riches of his shrine were seized by the crown, as being the personal property of the traitor.

Is it possible that such men as Cromwell and Cranmer, and others with minds as great, and holding stations almost as high, could have ever become so degraded as to take part in such proceedings ; but all men

had, from fear of the gibbet and the flame, so habituated themselves to follow the will of the tyrant, that they were little better than puppets, to be set in motion by the movement of his finger.

The King chuckled again, as he thought of the treasure the two coffers from Canterbury would place at his immediate command; and when Cromwell drew forth a list of suppressed Abbeys, and other religious houses, and stated in detail that no less than six hundred and forty four convents, ninety colleges; two thousand three hundred and seventy four chantries and free chapels, with one hundred and ten hospitals, were now annexed to the crown, his delight knew no bounds. It was at this moment the King first dropped a hint to Cromwell, that he saw no reason why, one day or other, his trusty and well-beloved Privy-seal should not become the Earl of Essex.

The King had now been a widower for nearly two years, Queen Jane having died twelve days after the birth of her son Edward, in October 1537. It had not been his own fault, that he had thus long remained single, but the difficulty was to fix upon a judicious choice. Ever since the death of Jane, the Protestant party had been decidedly losing ground.

Bishop Gardiner, the fiery bishop as he was called, had wheedled himself into the good graces of the King; it was he, with the King's Highness, it is believed, who drew up the celebrated "Six articles," or bloody statute, as it was commonly denominated.

Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, was the most zealous of all the Papists, and consequently the sworn enemy of Cromwell. Both were equally deep, both equally unscrupulous, as to the means employed to render their party triumphant. Each knowing how great was the influence a wife ever possessed over their master, as long as he liked her, they were both anxious that he should again marry; the one sought for a Roman Catholic Princess, the other a Princess of the reformed religion; and it was to this subject, of vital importance to himself, that Cromwell now led the conversation.

It appears that very soon after the death of Queen Jane, the King proposed to the Duchess Dowager of Milan, who replied, "that if she had two heads she might think of the match; but that as she had but one, she would rather decline the honour."

The Princess Mary of Guise was then thought of, but she was already engaged to the King of Scots. Henry then begged of the French King to bring the two sisters of Mary of Guise to Calais, that he might there, as if at a market, choose which he liked best; but this, French gallantry forbade, so the French King very properly declined. Cromwell had artfully led the King on to absolute despair, in not being able to find a Princess in every way worthy of receiving so great a blessing as himself, for a husband; he then told the King that he had just received the miniature of one of the greatest beauties in the world, the lovely Ann of Cleves, sister of the reigning Duke of Cleves, a Protestant, and that her "education, *sobriety*, and morals were excellent." Then drawing forth the miniature, by Lucas, the court painter of Cleves, he presented it to the enraptured eyes of his Grace.

Henry could always fall in love in five minutes, if he wished to do so, and feeling that way inclined at this moment, he at once looked upon the

fair face of Anne, as that of his future wife. Although, at this time no great beauty himself, he was determined to have beauty in her whom he married, so to be perfectly secure upon this point, it was settled, that Hans Holbein should start immediately to the court of the Duke of Cleves, and return with a correct portrait of the beautiful Anne.

Cromwell hugged himself at the success of his new scheme, for Anne being sister to one of the Princes of the Protestant confederacy, he believed by this match he should place the star of his own destiny so high in the ascendant, that no cloud the opposing party could send forth, would ever again be able to dim it. How poor, how weak and uncertain, are all the schemes built up by man! This, as he thought, well-laid plan—this, apparently sure haven for all his hopes, proved to be the rocky strand upon which his whole venture was wrecked and lost, for when the King saw Anne of Cleves, which he did in secret, he being disguised, she was so unlike the portraits he had received, that he at once took such a loathing to her, that it is said, he had nearly fallen from sickness. Cromwell, as may be supposed, received the whole weight of his indignation: the favourite attempted to excuse the act, by reminding Henry that he had himself desired his minister to find him a “fine large woman.” “Yes,” said the King, “a fine large woman, but I did not tell you to bring me a Flanders mare.”

We will now return to Father Brassinjaw, who still enjoyed the agreeable distinction of being laughed at by hundreds who passed and re-passed, as going to or from the fair. Brassinjaw turned his back upon the scoffers, and leaning his back against the cross-post at the doorway, ruminated seriously upon his future prospects. It appeared that poor Brassinjaw had been degraded from his office in the chapel upon the Bridge, for having been discovered picking out the real diamond eyes from one of the images; and then, in his anguish, having uttered some rather offensive expressions against the most religious Henry, he had been surprised to discover himself suddenly left for hours in the public cage.

“Once a priest, always a priest,” said he to himself; “but of what use is it, if we can no longer get anything by it? I’ve a great mind to be revenged by changing my creed altogether; but what creed shall I take to? that’s a ticklish question.” He first thought of the ANABAPTISTS, who, at that time, besides their peculiar theological dogmas, acknowledged *no judge or magistrate, no submission to civil law, no right of war, or of capital punishment*, except in so far as they were moved individually by what they interpreted to be inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

“There are many points in this,” he observed, “that would suit me well. I like the idea of ‘*no submission to civil law*’—that’s good—very good! ‘*No capital punishment*,’ that’s still better; but—but—but—” having said *but* two or three times, he turned his mind upon the “MEN OF THE FAMILY OF LOVE,” or Davidians, as they were called, from David George, who sometimes represented himself as Christ, and sometimes as the Holy Ghost. “Why shouldn’t I become one of ‘the Family of Love?’ I might then wear a silk liripoop, or any other sort of liripoop I chose, and might let my hair grow as long as I pleased, and use a dagger too if I liked.”

The long hair, the dagger, and the liripoop, or hood of silk, were three

things the Pope, in consequence of the growing *dandyism* of the English priesthood, had found it necessary to forbid. "But—but—but—" he continued, and having again said *but* several times, the PREDESTINARIANS came under his examination; these he rather liked, for they affirmed that *'the elect could NOT sin, nor the regenerate fall from grace.'* Next he thought of the ARIANS, then the UNITARIANS; but of these he seemed to think but very lightly: not so the next, THE LIBERTINES; this sect caused him to hesitate for some time, and perhaps he might have become a Libertine, but for the ANTINOMIANS, who maintained, both by their teaching and their practice, that the *'chosen were at liberty to help themselves to whatever food, raiment, goods, and chattels their necessities required; and no sin or abomination of the outward man was of any significance, provided only that they sinned not in the inner man.'* This appeared to Father Brassinjaw so comfortable, so charitable a creed towards its own followers, that he had all but made up his mind, when he was suddenly caused to turn round, by hearing a large bell ringing at no great distance, and a man's voice exclaiming, "O yes! O yes! O yes!" It was one of the criers, or walking advertisers, who came to announce that the late landlord of the Cardinal's Hat, there upon the Bridge, having been hanged, the whole concern, including the goodwill of that "highly respectable house," was to be sold *"by the candle."*

The selling by the candle was an old style of auction, which is, we believe, in some few places occasionally employed to this day. The method pursued was this: A piece of candle, about an inch, was lighted when the sale began, and he whose bidding was the last before the candle expired, was declared the purchaser.

The moment Brassinjaw heard the announcement about the candle, a sudden light broke in upon him. He remembered the happy hours he had passed in that delightful spot; how happy then would the man be who could call that spot his own! His mind became suddenly fixed. "The prophecy," he exclaimed, "the prophecy shall be fulfilled! It was always foretold that one day I should possess a Cardinal's Hat, and now, cost what it will, that Cardinal's Hat shall cover this virtuous head; it shall be mine. Yes," he continued in a tone of great determination, "yes, I will relinquish the SPIRITUAL, for a SPIRITUOUS calling. I will become a publican and ——" he was just going to add "sinner," but seeming to feel that that would be understood without expressing it, he said no more.

When the time came which was to permit of his being allowed to descend from his unenviable exaltation, the two halberdiers, who acted as a guard of dishonour, quietly marched away, and left him to do just as he liked, either to remain or go; there being no door, Father Brassinjaw crept from beneath the cross-beam before mentioned, and at once hurried towards the Cardinal's Hat, to examine more minutely into his intended purchase.

Not a nook or corner did he leave unexamined. There were some odd things connected with this house, which, to any but one who had had such a thorough schooling in the mysteries of deception, and underhand proceedings as Father Brassinjaw, might have been overlooked, or passed by heedlessly. There was not a single room, in the partitions of which



Father Grassham in the Cage

there were not holes, through which those in the next apartment might easily witness all that passed.

Brassinjaw, observing this, began to feel already quite at home, so being alone at the time, he commenced examining every panel of the wainscot, and sure enough, exactly as he began to guess would be the case, so it proved, for more than one were made to slip aside, and leave an opening large enough for a man to pass, and thus secretly enter, room after room, all over the dwelling. Observing a trap-door near one of the tables, indeed exactly under the seat upon which he himself had generally sat, he took hold of the ring, and raising it, had nearly tumbled head long through, from alarm, at finding it opened over the waters, which were at that moment dashing madly down the falls beneath the Bridge. Having steadied his nerves, he examined the trap-door, to see whether it was strong enough to be left over such a dangerous outlet; in doing this, he became quite surprised to find the hinges constructed in a manner, that would allow them to bend equally well both ways, so that, but for a couple of iron bolts protruding from the opposite side of the opening, the trap would, when lowered, fall towards the roaring waters. Upon further examination, he discovered that these bolts too, were moveable, and could be pushed back, although they were held forward by a spring. He shut down the trap, and began to reflect upon the probable use to which such a door might be put; here his ecclesiastical education was of use to him, and brought to his mind the strange resemblance between this trap and the *oubliettes* of the Spanish Inquisition.

Having once caught the idea, he began to think that if these bolts were made to move, there was, doubtless, some method by which their movement might be accomplished, without going beneath, and forcing them back with the hand, a thing, considering their position, almost impossible to be done. In looking along the floor in the direction the bolts lay, and observing a portion of the boards rotten and rather broken away, he stooped down, and endeavouring to make the small opening larger by breaking away more of the rotten part, in giving a tolerably hard pull at it, the whole plank came up, and there he discovered two ropes attached to the bolts, which, passing along beneath the floor, entered the adjoining room. He carefully replaced the board, and going into the next apartment, found an empty cupboard, at the bottom of which were two round apertures, evidently through which the ropes had at one time passed. In the back of this cupboard he also perceived chinks and holes, so disposed, that a person shut in the cupboard could observe everything that passed in the other room.

All these discoveries, far from alarming Brassinjaw, or making him shudder at the thought of what dreadful scenes might perhaps have taken place there, rather whetted his appetite for the acquisition of such a strange abode. Other parties now appearing, Father Brassinjaw left the Cardinal's Hat, more determined than ever to become its sure possessor.

Having once made up his mind to revolutionize his mode of living, he thought the first thing to be done was to change his outward man: this, by the by, is a very common course; many a rogue believes himself reformed, when he puts on the covering of honesty, forgetting that, unless

the cancer of a vicious heart be thoroughly rooted out, the fruit that heart brings forth will still be rotten at the core, however disguised in outward form.

"First, I'll to the butcher," said Brassinjaw; "my present habiliments are but ill suited to the tapster's trade, though his and mine are not so widely differing as silly people think; the business of both of us is to intoxicate the mind, and make men fools." The more he worked up his own mind to the change he intended to make, the more did he try to believe that his new calling was the honestest of the two; and certainly as he, and, alas! thousands of others, had exercised his miscalled holy power, perhaps, the publican would prove the lesser sinner.

As Master Thomas Stow, of Aldgate, was a tailor of no mean repute, our saintly father hied him thither, where, as Horton had formerly done, he found the old man, spectacles on nose, his boy beside him, both hard at work; and, as before, the elder Stow was soundly scolding the younger, for thinking more of old musty tomes, than he ever did of jackets, jerkins, slops, or hose.

The cause of Horton's visit had not more surprised the old tailor, than did the announcement made by Brassinjaw, that he "lacked a comely suit of newest cut," and, odd enough for an intended publican, he desired it might be made "of some right *sober* colour"—we fear it would be the only part about him that would remain sober, if once he took possession of the Cardinal's Hat.

The old tailor took off his spectacles, wiped them, and then put them on again, and looking full in the face of Brassinjaw, he exclaimed with surprise, "Why, holy father, I should have as much expected to have seen Saint Thomas à Becket himself, rest his holy bones, walk in upon such an errand, as Father Brassinjaw."

"And I should have as soon expected," replied Brassinjaw, "to have seen so wise a tailor, as Master Stow is known to be, swallow his own goose to cure an indigestion, as to have heard him call that rascally rebel, à Becket, a saint! Why, know you not, man, that our most religious King, the gentle-hearted Henry—" here Brassinjaw frowning mumbled something to himself, which was no doubt an eulogistic expression, far too flattering to His Grace the King, to be uttered aloud—"Yes, the King in his great wisdom, has found out, what any other fool—I mean *any* fool, might have done for the last four hundred years, that à Becket was but a counterfeit Saint, otherwise, why didn't he, the other day, face the lawyers, and answer for himself like a man; but no, he let the action go by default, for he knew he could not deceive King Henry, though he might all the world beside. And now, Master Stow, know that if you would keep your ears to yourself, you had better keep your tongue so too, and never call à Becket saint again."

"I never thought him one!" exclaimed the old tailor, falling in a moment into the humour of the times, which made men call black white, one day, and white black the next; this habit, brought on by fear, extended from the highest to the lowest in the land; "I never thought him one, and it always went against my stomach, as I let the lie slip off my tongue when I said he was. But now, Father Brassinjaw——"

"Father! father me no more!" said Brassinjaw: "when I put on thy new doublet, I put off the old priest. So father me no more; I am now no father, though perhaps I may be soon."

"But, prithee, what in the name of the saints has wrought this wondrous change in thee?" enquired the old tailor.

"The times, man, the times! the badness of the times!" replied Brassinjaw, sticking out his two arms quite straight, until he looked like a fat letter T.

As the old tailor began to measure him, he continued—"All trades, Master Stow, have their ups and downs; no firm ever lasted for ever, howsoever carefully, cleverly, deeply, it might have been conducted—let the sleeves be large and puffed—perhaps we, of our craft, ought not to complain, for we carried on a roaring trade for some hundreds of years, and he who has left off bankrupt now the market's stopped, has but himself to blame—there was no lack of pickings, Master Stow, there was no lack of pickings—let my money-pouch be wide and deep—and now, Master Stow," he said, as he found the old tailor upon both his knees, measuring his legs, "tell me, man, which think you, will best become my style of figure—the olden slops, and tight-drawn hose, or a neat pair of the new-fangled trousers?"

By this observation, we may gather that trousers were beginning to be introduced in the time of Henry the Eighth.

"With such a calf as thine," replied the old tailor, at the same time holding out about three-quarters of a yard of the measure, which he had just taken from around Brassinjaw's leg, "with such a calf as thine, it were a sin, a downright sin, to hide a morsel of your legs beneath those silly things called trousers, or 'neath ought beside."

"So Margery, my little housekeeper, has often said," replied Brassinjaw, "so let it be the slops and hose. And now good, Master Stow, what's stirring in the world?"

"Stirring!" exclaimed the old tailor, suddenly becoming quite excited; "stirring! marry the whole world is stirring methinks, thanks to that villain, Cromwell—it's no use checking me—he is a villain, and there is but one still greater, and that is his minion, Harry Horton—he told me I should one day remember him, and I don't think it likely I shall ever forget either him or his master."

"But why this fury?" enquired Brassinjaw; "what has Lord Cromwell done to thee?"

"Done!" replied the other; "he has *undone* me. You know my pretty house, and pretty garden, behind Throgmorton Street? that house, abutted upon the palings of Lord Cromwell's grounds. He thought a tailor, I suppose, too mean a neighbour, to be so close to a dirty blacksmith's son, so coveted a portion of my land; but I loved my garden as my life, and swore I'd never part with it. Now, would you believe it, or can you picture my surprise, when on reaching my home the other night, I found that Lord Cromwell had pulled down the pales, had undermined the foundations of my house, had placed it on huge rollers, and having wheeled it some two and twenty feet, there set it down again; a wall was then built up, and I was robbed of twenty and two feet of my own garden ground!"

Strange as this circumstance may appear, it is no more strange than true. The house was moved away on rollers, unknown to Stow, and the ground added to Cromwell's garden, without the slightest remuneration being offered. Such was the tyranny of those times, that, notwithstanding the grossness of this outrage, "*no man durst go to argue the matter ;*" to add to the hardship, Stow had still to pay his whole rent, although one half of his garden had been taken from him ; the rent he paid will sound prodigious to a modern ear—it was no less a sum than *six and sixpence* a year !

The tears quite came into the eyes of the old tailor, as he recounted his wrongs, which he laid entirely to the spite of Horton, whom he said, "he was sure had put the fancy into Lord Cromwell's mind."

"Oh ! then," said Brassinjaw, "you too have a small account to settle with Horton, have ye ? I have one heavier perhaps than yours, but leave it to me, Master Stow, leave it to me, and I'll get payment, with interest too, for both of us. I never let *my* hawks fly until I am sure they can strike their game—so be not in a hurry—but you *shall* be paid to your heart's content ; this I promise, and I'll keep my word. And now, Master Stow, know ye any one deeply skilled in the mystery of barbery ? Some cunning wight who can make a nostrum that shall cause one's hair to grow both quick and thick ?"

The old tailor said he could not answer for the truth of what he had heard, but that it was reported that, at that very moment there was to be found in the fair, the very man his new customer required—"Yes," he said, "it is reported so wonderful is the power of this extraordinary pomade that an old lady mistaking it for lip salve, rubbed it over her upper lip, when, in less than three days she had a pair of moustachios, of such prolific growth, that she has been obliged to shave twice a-day ever since!" Having said this, the old man looked at Brassinjaw from under his spectacles, as much as to say—"What do you think of that ?"

"That's my man!" exclaimed Brassinjaw, who having impressed upon the old tailor's mind, that not a moment was to be lost in finishing his new habiliments, at once hurried off to the fair.

CHAPTER XVII.

* * * * in less than in an hour
Shall all be drench'd, so hideous is the shower.

CHAUCER.

THE night on which the fair closed, turned out wet and melancholy ; the wind whistled mournfully beneath the arches of the Bridge, and the creaking sign-boards, as they swung slowly backwards and forwards, sent forth a wailing sound, that to an imaginative mind, seemed like the voices of weeping spirits, sighing o'er the dead.

Flora was sitting endeavouring to amuse her poor mistress, by telling her fairy tales, and chanting the prettiest ditties of the day. The one she was now singing, was a prodigious favourite with the Bridge-shooter,

more perhaps on account of the fair writer, than for the merit of the words—for be it known, it was written by Flora's self! This attempt of hers need scarcely be wondered at, for love makes all of us wonderfully poetical. Thus ran the lay:—

He says—"I'm like a nosegay rare,
Formed of the sweetest flowers that blow,
Like tendrils of the vine my hair,
In graceful curls that clust'ring grow:
The roses in my cheeks are found,
The passion-flower in my eyes,
The lillies clasp my neck around,
The violet's sweet arc in my sighs.
To make these flowers together hold,
Nor let them withering fall apart,
He'll bind me with a ring of gold,
And wear me ever near his heart."

But flowers will fade—and so must I,
And no more be the blooming bride,
New powers to please, I then must try,
Or be like them soon cast aside.
Tho' flowers do fade, and death's foul stain,
On every leaf be plainly seen,
Their fragrance oft will still remain,
To tell us what they once have been.
So, to remind him of my doom,
And that our loves be not forgot,
One flower shall spring from out my tomb,
That flower shall be—Forget-me-not.

When Flora ceased, the wind sighed its sad approval; it then became louder and louder. Alyce started—her countenance beaming with hope, for nothing could convince her but, that each sound she heard floating upon the night breeze, was the voice of her child. Every few minutes Flora was compelled to open the casement and look out, and as the breezes rushed in, Alyce would exclaim, "There, there! I hear her plainly. Oh! do, do let her come to me—the curse is taken from me now, and I may see her—indeed I may."

As the night advanced, the wind and rain increased, and anxiously did Flora await the return of her master, with Edward and the Bridge-shooter; for until the merchant came, she knew it were useless to endeavour to get Alyce to retire to rest. Her complaint had taken a perfectly new turn; instead of remaining for hours, nay days, without moving or speaking, she was now ever restless, ever talking; this was regarded as a good sign, for no madness is so certainly incurable, as that of a fixed melancholy.

The bell of Saint Paul had struck ten—another hour passed—the eleventh hour was heard, but still the merchant came not. Flora, just as the clock was striking the midnight hour, heard Master Hewet and his companions entering the house. Alyce started, and running towards the door of the apartment, would not believe but that her husband had brought home her child.

"To-morrow, to-morrow, dear Alyce," said the merchant, to pacify her, but he felt ashamed at deceiving one so dear to him, for he could

not disguise from himself, how hopeless were his promises. He told Flora, that from circumstances they had that day heard, there was really some shadow of a chance of having at least their doubts resolved. The sudden disappearance of the monster show, a day before the closing of the fair, looked suspicious, it must be owned. Hewet had, he said, laid a plan, by which the truth he hoped would be brought to light; he had sent one of his most trusty men, one who had known the child from her birth, to follow the show from place to place, as, in all probability, when the parties, if they were really guilty of stealing away the child, were far away from London, and off their guard, they would again employ her as before. The mountebanks had gone, it was said, to Uxbridge, so his spy had that night started upon their track.

As they were about to retire to rest, they all shuddered at hearing a sound, the meaning of which they knew full well; it was that of some poor drowning wretch, struggling against the pitiless waters of the cataract beneath the Bridge—such accidents were almost of daily occurrence; they crossed themselves, and mentally offering up a prayer for the soul of him, who had at that moment gone to another world, they took their lamps, and retired to their various chambers.

Edward had just entered his own dormitory, when he remembered that he had not secured the outer door, so once more descending, he placed his hand upon the bolt, when he fancied he heard a moan! He started; then looked around; but thinking it must have been merely the sighing of the wind, he proceeded to finish his task, when the moan again struck upon his ear, more sadly than before; he could not imagine whence the sound proceeded. He listened—all was still—again he listened; when suddenly his doubts were doubts no longer; the person in distress, he now felt sure, was lying near the door—he opened it—the rush of the wind had nearly extinguished his lamp. In another moment, those above were frightfully alarmed at hearing Edward calling aloud, as if he had gone mad; they hurried down, where they saw Osborne kneeling by some helpless human being.

Hewet flew to lend his assistance, when who can paint the scene which followed, for in another moment the merchant was holding in his arms his own, his long lost child!

So suddenly, so unexpectedly had this happiness burst upon the merchant, that he gave himself no time for reflection, but at once hurried with his precious load into the presence of his wife, exclaiming—"Alyce, Alyce, God be thanked, for he has heard our prayer, she is here!"

Had Hewet thought for an instant of the overpowering effect, that such an unprepared restoration of the child might have had upon his wife, he would not have dared this venture; but it was done, and he now trembled for the consequence.

So strangely had Alyce been working upon her own shattered mind, that when she embraced her child, she did so, certainly with all the true feeling of a doting mother, but without any approach to that overwhelming burst of joy and wonder, that might have been looked for in ordinary cases; no, the coming of her soul's idol seemed to her as a thing of course,

"I told you, William," she said, "I told you, she would return."

often have I heard her gentle voice, whispering into my ear in the dead of night—'Weep not, mother, weep not for me—for I am safe; I will return; I will conquer the evil fiend, and then I will come again;' did you not say so, Anne? did you not whisper those words of hope into your mother's ear? But for that hope, I had gone mad—I had gone mad."

The child was so overcome with fatigue and suffering, with fear, hope, wonder, joy, that for a time she neither saw nor heard what passed around her. All she did was to cling round the neck of her mother, and sobbing, repeat again and again—"Are you not my mother?—my real, real, mother? Oh, tell me you are, or kill me—kill me!"

Flora did not hesitate for a moment to give way to her feelings, so supporting herself in a corner of the room, she roared out lustily.

Edward and the Bridge-shooter stood looking at each other very stoically, as much as to say, "Will you cry? I won't, if you don't?" But in spite of all their contortions of visage, and sundry little gulps, a vast deal more of the heart's dew would hang about their eyelids, than they were willing, or would have allowed, to be seen there.

Again and again did the child cling, first to the neck of her mother, then to that of the merchant; when presently, turning and seeing Flora standing with open arms, she quite screamed with joy, and flew into them; their embrace was mutually loving and sincere. She laughed and cried both, as she embraced her childhood's playmate, Edward, but checked herself suddenly, as she was going to bestow the same endearment upon Flora's lover, in whom she fancied she saw a perfect stranger; the Bridge-shooter she only remembered in his rags and tatters.

Poor William felt quite hurt that he should not be recognised, so blubbered out—"Why, don't you know me, Mistress Anne? and have you quite forgotten poor ragged Billy-the-bridge-shooter?"

"No, no! indeed I have not!" said Anne running to him, "it was you who taught dear Edward how to save my life—bless you, bless you!"

William was so delighted, that he seized up the child and completely swung her round, as he kissed her. When he put her down again, he said, "Mother is a witch—upon my life I'm afraid she is—she has always said that little Anne, for that's what she calls Mistress Anne, would start up when we least expected it, and I'm sure we least expected it such an awful night as this. I hope she may prove a witch in everything;" then whispering to Flora, he said "for she tells me that our dear mistress, there, will yet be wiser than ever, now she has no holy father near her; that's wicked though, isn't it?"

"I'm not quite sure," replied Flora, in a like whisper; the truth was, Flora had become a little tainted with the coning protestantism of the day, and therefore eyed the old-fashioned priestcraft with a rather doubting glance.

When the first burst of joy and astonishment had in a degree subsided, they began to turn their thoughts to the arrangements for the night. It was at once settled, that until the morning, no questions should be put to little Anne, as they still called her, concerning what had happened to her since her abduction, three years before. This was a sore trial to all, for all were burning with curiosity. But the child's care-worn look, and

the state of her feet, which they now, for the first time, perceived were partially bandaged up in rags, and other parts bare, and torn by wandering over the rough and rugged roads, induced them to conclude that the sooner she could be consigned to sleep's soothing care the better.

As Anne was to pass that night with her mother, the first for three long years, it was arranged that Edward should resign his room to the merchant, and himself take up his quarters in Horton's former dormitory.

We will not attempt to describe the varied feelings of this now happy party, as they, laughing and crying, and hugging the child again and again in their arms, took their leave of each other for the night.

What appeared to amuse Flora most, was her own perplexity in not knowing where she should find proper clothes for her young mistress ; for, as she said, " I'm sure it's no use bringing her own old things, for she's grown out of all knowledge, and is really quite a woman !"

It was certainly true that Anne had grown, even more than is usually the case, in a like space of time ; and from the life of care which she had lately passed, her countenance had all the thoughtful expression of one far older ; she had, in fact, become a woman in her childhood.

Although the weather continued as stormy, and the wind howled as sadly, as it passed along the Bridge, yet the inmates of the merchant's dwelling heeded them not ; there was a bright sun shining in all their hearts, that seemed to light up every object with its own golden rays. Edward Osborne hummed a cheerful air as he descended towards the sleeping room of his former fellow-apprentice ; and the Bridge-shooter, so far forgot himself in his feelings of content, that for some time after he had ascended to the top of the house, he could be heard whistling in high glee ; and there was a peculiar sound, as if he were dancing to his own music.

Horton's old room had, in a certain degree, changed its appearance very much since he had last seen it ; in fact, it had been made the magazine of warlike arms, belonging to the peaceful garrison of Hewet's citadel of the Golden Fleece !

The truth was, that ever since the Pope's bull of excommunication against Henry had been promulgated, which bull had been long before prepared, but had been kept back *in terrorem*, until his Holiness should be quite convinced that Henry was an incorrigible and disobedient son of Rome—warlike preparations had been going on throughout the King's dominions. As many of our readers may have often heard of excommunications, without perhaps being aware of the gentle, charitable, wording of such works, we will give an extract, and leave it to their own minds to decide, whether such document was not more beseeching the invention of a fiend, then becoming the Christian feelings of Heaven's Vicegerent, as the Pope professed himself to be.

The Bishop being clothed in white, and accompanied by other priests belonging to the church, with uplifted cross and candles burning, stood up in the pulpit, and said, " By the authority of God the Father Almighty, and of the blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints, we excommunicate, and anathematise, and deliver over to the devil all the aforesaid malefactors, that excommunicated, anathematised, and delivered over to the devil they may be ;" the following surely must have been penned by

Beelzebub himself:—"Accursed be they in towns, in fields, in highways, in footpaths, under roofs, out of doors, and in all other places, standing, sitting, lying down, rising up, walking, running, awake, asleep, eating drinking, and doing whatsoever other thing; from all illumination, and all other good things of the church we debar them; to the devil we condemn them; and in the pains of hell-fire we extinguish their souls—unless they repent and make SATISFACTION, even as this candle is extinguished." And so having said, to strike the more terror, amidst the sounding of bells he put out the light.

Although Henry the Eighth lived in an age which had become sufficiently enlightened to allow kings to smile at such impotent blasphemy, there had been times when such denunciations would bring the mightiest potentates crouching bare-headed, bare-footed, on their hands and knees, to supplicate at the foot of the Pope, his intercession with Heaven, to remove such a weighty curse.

Although excommunication was one of the most powerful weapons wielded by the once-resistless head of the Romish Church, and was by that head so frequently employed for political as well as religious purposes, yet it was not, and is not confined exclusively to the Pope; nor, if such anathema could really send man's soul to perdition, is the Pope himself quite safe; for in the Greek Church, the Patriarch of Jerusalem annually excommunicated, not only the Pope, but the whole Church of Rome! There are one or two oddities connected with the Greek excommunication; for it condemns the body, of offenders after death to remain "*as hard as a flint, or piece of steel.*" And, as the Greeks believe, that if a person die excommunicated, the devil immediately enters into the lifeless corpse, the relatives, to prevent him, cut the body in pieces, and *boil them in wine.* Now, for ourselves, we had always imagined that wine was far more likely to bring the evil spirit, than to keep him away; but it appears we are never too old to learn.

It is true that Henry had the courage to set the Pope and all his Bulls at defiance; but as the kingdom was still a Roman Catholic kingdom, and remained so until the death of Henry—for, as it has been correctly stated, Henry did not object to the Pope nor his power, but to the *person*—in short, in his own kingdom he wished to be himself the Pope—and in his capacity of "supreme head of the church," he exercised quite as great a system of tyranny as ever did the Bishop of Rome—the title by which the Pope was henceforth to be known in England.

The Bishop of Rome now being convinced that further attempts to reclaim Henry, and bring him back to "holy obedience" would prove abortive, set seriously to work in uniting in one bond the Catholic princes of the continent. He made strenuous efforts, which, at last, were crowned with success, to bring about a reconciliation between the two great enemies, Charles the Fifth, Emperor of Germany, and Francis the First, King of France. A truce for ten years was concluded between these two powerful sovereigns, which circumstance not only alarmed Henry, but the whole kingdom; for it was currently reported, and believed too, that Francis and Charles were to head a league against this land.

So ill prepared was Henry for war, that he was in a continued state

of fear and alarm. He now, too, began to be suspicious of his own subjects. So many cruelties had been inflicted upon all sects and parties, who, in any way dared to differ from him, that people began to get tired of such atrocities; and it may be doubted, but for the mutual hatred of the now rising Reformists, and the champions of the old religion, whether or not Henry the Eighth might not have been driven from his throne.

To allay the King's fears was a most troublesome task for Cromwell, who, in order to obtain all the secret information he could from abroad, kept spies "in Rome, Naples, Milan, Genoa, Venice, Madrid, Paris, Brussels, Frankfort, and in almost every corner of Europe." We need scarcely say that Horton and Spikely had been more than once employed upon this service. To raise a feeling of security in the minds of the citizens of London, and give an appearance of preparation to enemies abroad, all the males between sixteen and sixty years of age were once more enrolled, and exercised in the discipline of war.

This circumstance accounts for Horton's old room being, as we have before remarked, greatly changed in appearance; for the walls were everywhere hung with accoutrements of one sort or another.

The merchant Hewet was a captain of archers; and Edward, with William-the-bridge-shooter, two of his men; and very proud the two latter were, when they appeared in public armed to their teeth.

Before Edward retired to his couch, he amused himself for some time in examining the various arms. He greatly admired his master's sword, which was adorned after the Asiatic fashion, that is, *damasquinée*, or inlaid with gold—an adornment lately introduced into Europe by Benvenuto Cellini. In examining his own dag, or tacke, or, in other words, a pistol—the only difference between a pistol and a tacke was, that the former had a knob at the end, whilst the butt of the latter was merely cut in a slanting direction—in pretending to go through the practice of loading these fire-arms, Edward discovered that one of the dags was still charged.

"How thoughtless of William," said he, "to leave his arms in this dangerous condition."

He said William, but had he looked a little closer at the weapon, he would have found his own name upon it; but, as is usual with most people, it never struck him that he himself could be so silly, therefore the blame naturally was thrown upon some other person's shoulders.

"Well," said he, as he approached the window with the intention of discharging the dag, but checking himself, laid the weapon down on a chest near his bed, "well, it must remain so, I suppose, until the morning, for if I fire it from the window, it may alarm, not only our house, but the neighbours too."

So, now, turning his mind upon the strange reappearance of his former darling little playmate, Anne, he prepared to go to rest.

"Poor child!" he said, "what a miserable plight was she in. Hers will be a marvellous tale, I suspect. I'm longing for to-morrow."

Having extinguished his lamp, he went to the little window, and casting his eyes towards the heavens—"Come," said he, "the clouds are breaking fast, and the strong wind will soon disperse them. I love to see the moon shining upon the water. Every silver ripple seems

to me like a row of tiny spirits, dancing in their own light. The moon is at the full, and even now is labouring hard to get a' peep at our dark and sleeping world. Good night, fair queen!" he continued, nodding to the moon, as it for an instant became visible between two dark rolling clouds, "good night! I am too tired to wait until you have subdued your black and vaporous enemies."

Edward threw himself upon his couch, where he lay for some time, turning over and over in his mind all the strange events of the last three years: as he became more and more drowsy, the dreadful night of the marsh came, in all the vivid colouring of a dream, before his mind's eye: he started wide awake, for he had experienced that very peculiar sensation, not uncommon between waking and sleeping, of suddenly falling from a great height. The light of the moon was now beginning to shine, although faintly, in at the little window. Feeling quite unnerved by the impression his dreamy thoughts had made upon his mind, he covered his head up with the bed-clothes, and tried to compose his nerves in the forgetfulness of sleep. He had been lying thus for some time, and counting over and over again numbers from one up to a thousand, to try to bring on slumber: this failing, he shut his eyes, and endeavoured to fancy he saw long lines of sheep wandering along the edge of a mountain, and by counting them one by one, keep unpleasant thoughts away, and thus at last unconsciously sink into the realms of Morpheus. Just when forgetfulness was exerting her power over memory, he was startled by a strange sort of creaking, wrenching noise; he listened; then raising the clothes more from off his head, he felt convinced it came from that part of the room in which the window was placed. He now recollected the former attempt at robbery which had actually been made in that very room; he slowly raised his head until he could see the window; the night was still hazy, but sufficient light was in the heavens to render the window very apparent: presently he saw a hand holding a wrenching-tool rise up; the tool was applied to the casement, which had, ever since the former attempt, been kept securely fastened. Osborne blessed the chance which had left him the loaded weapon; he seized it firmly in his grasp, and remained quietly watching the progress the robber was making, determined not to stir until he could take his aim with certainty and effect: he was not long kept in anxious suspense, for the thief appeared to be so thoroughly a master of his trade, that in a very few minutes the casement gave way, and turned back upon its hinges. Osborne now trembled, not with fear, but from a strange feeling that in another minute, perhaps, he should have sent an erring human being to his dread account; a moment more, and he would have started up to alarm the robber, and thus enable him to escape, but ere he could determine upon which course to pursue, the head of a man was seen above the sill of the window; bang went the pistol; one cry was heard; and then the heavy dash of some one falling into the flood beneath.

Edward sprang from his bed, intending to fly to the casement, but was suddenly checked by striking his foot against something sharp in the floor, which cut his foot severely. As soon as the first shock of pain was past, he limped to the window; but nothing could he there

discover, excepting the rope which Horton so long before had placed there for his own purposes. He drew that into the room; then hastened to the door, intending to acquaint his master with what had happened; and whom, with the other inmates of the dwelling, he doubted not must be already alarmed.

Not hearing the least noise in the house, he believed, which was the truth, that all but himself still slept; so he determined not to disturb them. He again closed his door—barred up the window in the strongest way he could; and having not only loaded his own brace of dogs, he loaded those belonging to William as well. He placed them in a row before him on the bed; then, resting his back against the wall at the head of his couch, passed the remainder of the night in watching.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At meate was she well ytaught withal;
 She let no morsel from her lippes fall:
 Ne wet her fingers in her saucē deep.
 Well could she carry a morsel, and well keep,
 That no drop ne fell upon her breast.

CHAUCER.

FLORA and the Bridge-shooter were up by times, and never did two lovers—for they now no longer disguised their affections from each other—go to work with such happy hearts as they did while preparing for the family breakfast. William himself gave the last polish to the pewter platters; for the return of the child was an occasion too joyous to be treated but as a fête, therefore Flora had, unbidden, brought out some of the best things in the house.

The silver tankards were all displayed on a side buffet. William had knocked up at least half a dozen of their neighbours to procure sundry dainties, such as sea-gulls, served up in cold jelly; reys and ruffs, and delicious venison pasty, too, were procured; and conger eels, in a rich sauce of cream. Then there were fruits, among which were plums that had been introduced from Italy by Cromwell himself in 1510. A great addition to our fruits had been lately made; for instance, the pale gooseberry, the apricot, and the musk-melon from the Netherlands, had not been known in England twenty years before; and cherries were only just brought into notice. To the Netherlands we also owe our salads and our cabbages, which were first brought over about 1524. Pippins came about a year after; and artichokes were not cultivated until this reign. Currants, which afterwards came from Zante, were not yet known—not indeed until 1555.

The superb breakfast now being laid out, was rendered complete by several flagons of Cromwell's sweetest ale. All the flower vases, containing the hop plant—for hops were as yet regarded in scarcely any other light than that of a garden plant—were brought into the breakfast room; so that when the merchant, who was the next to make his appearance, entered, he was quite struck and delighted

at Flora's forethought and taste. The merchant's countenance beamed with joy, as he thanked them both for their kindness, and thought of the blessed occasion, for which these preparations had been made.

"So happily had I gone to rest last night," observed the merchant, "that I had scarcely placed my head upon the pillow, ere I was lost in profound slumber, and I fear me, I have overslept myself this morning. Where's Edward?"

They said "no doubt that he too had slept soundly, and not believing that any would that morning be inclined to very early rising, he played the sluggard." Scarcely had they said this, when Edward entered, and surprised them greatly by his limping gait; but they were far more astonished, when he related what had passed during the night. On speaking of his lameness, he held forth a sharp piece of steel, which he said he had discovered stuck deeply into the floor of Horton's room; it was evidently the point of a knife or dagger, and was stained with rust, or something that looked more like blood.

Osborne was about to throw it into the river, when William said it would do capitally for him to scratch out the blots he was always making in his copy books; so taking it from Edward, he carefully placed it in his pouch.

Flora now went to call her mistress, but soon returned with her and the child; they had been up before any in the house, and Anne had been so industriously at work, that she had cut and contrived the things her mother had given her, so judiciously, that she appeared quite a "lady again," as Flora said.

The moment the child saw the merchant, she run to him, and throwing her arms round his neck, exclaimed—"Then you are indeed my father, and you will never again give me to that wicked woman, who used to beat me so; will you, father?"

"No, no, dear child," said Hewet, kissing her tenderly, "you have nothing more to fear from any mortal living; having once regained our treasure, we will guard it as our lives."

Anne evinced great anxiety at observing Edward's lameness, but he passed it off as a mere trifling hurt in his foot, and not worth a thought. Not a word was said about the attempted robbery, fearing that it might alarm Alyce and the child. They now sat down to the morning meal; William alone acted as carver and waiter, for in consequence of Edward's hurt, he did not act this morning in his usual capacity of assistant to his master and mistress.

Every moment Anne's eyes were wandering from one spot to another, as she recalled to her memory the various objects, that had so often recurred to her mind, in the mysterious visions of sleep. "Ah," she said, "how often used I to dream of this dear room, and then awake with my eyes streaming with tears: how I used to pray that I might one day, only for one day, be here again as I used to be; and now to think that I am really, really here!—or, perhaps, I am dreaming now—oh, Heaven, grant that it be not a dream!" As she said this, she looked round imploringly; anxiety was depicted on her beautiful countenance—"Oh, do speak," she said, "and tell me it is not a dream!"

"No, love," replied the merchant, "only look upon the misery you

have just escaped from, as a dream; all the happiness you see here is real. But what meant you by praying of me not *again* to give you to that wicked woman? Did you not know that you had been stolen away?"

"Oh, no! I was made to believe," replied Anne, "that I was really the child of that cruel woman, Nan."

"Nan!" exclaimed every one present.

"Yes," said the child, "Nan; she was always called Nan; I never heard any other name; but she had had a good many, for she had been married six times."

This assertion caused Flora to lift up her eyes in horror, as the child went on.

"Her present husband is called Ray—Ray the Clipper."

"And what's a clipper?" enquired Flora, in astonishment.

"What, don't you know that?" said the child, quite innocently; "oh, a clipper is any one who gets his living by cutting people's purses; Ray was once quite celebrated, but left off that business when he married my mother—no, no, I don't mean that—I don't mean my own dear mother here—I mean Nan."

"But who is Nan, dear?" enquired the merchant.

"You remember," said the child, turning towards Flora and Edward, "the woman who came here on that dreadful day, three years ago? Oh, that day! never, never shall I forget that day!" Anne shuddering cast a glance round the room, as if almost expecting to see the wretch lurking in some corner, ready to seize her—"That woman was Nan. She told you that she was to take me to my mother. You recollect how joyously I left the house with her, for I thought she had then told me the truth. My father, you know, was away with Horton—how strange I should never think of him, and yet I used always to be thinking of Edward—but where is Horton?"

The merchant placed his finger upon his lips. Alyce had fortunately not heard the name, and the child had for so long been schooled to understand the merest glance, that she felt that that was a name, for some reason or other, not to be spoken, so continued—"I sang and danced along across the Bridge, the woman holding fast by my hand. The moment we had quitted the Bridge, she turned suddenly down to the Bank-side, and along some miserable and dirty lanes. I began to cry with fear; she dragged me on violently, and with horrid oaths, declared she would murder me, if I did not instantly cease my howling. We went on and on, through places I had never seen before, to one more dark and horrible than any I had yet passed through—it was called the black arch of the Clink."

"I know it well," exclaimed William, "and a viler spot is not in this great kingdom. Why, none but thieves and murderers ever dwell there—it's the rogues' sanctuary, and woe betide the honest foot that treads that path."

"At that black arch," continued Anne Hewet, "there are three miserable dwellings; the entrance to one of them was by a vast flight of rugged stone steps; she dragged me up the whole of them on my back, for I had become so frightened, that I screamed, and struggled to get away;

but I was very little then, and she dragged me up as easily as if I had been a feather, for Nan was wonderfully strong. When she had me securely in the room above, 'she gave me a violent blow on the side of the head, and' said, 'Now, mark me, if you cease not your bellowing I'll strip your skin off as quickly as I do these clothes;' saying this she, began to tear off my things.

"Where, where is my mother?" I screamed out. 'Here,' she said, 'here—I am your mother—the only mother that you will ever know.' 'No,' I said, 'you are not my mother; she's all goodness and kindness, she——' 'She has done with you,' she replied; 'and now know the truth—you were never Dame Hewet's child—but mine. I lent you to her when she had lost her own; she paid me for the loan; but she has found her real daughter, and has returned you upon my hands; so now you know they have turned you off, you will learn to obey me, as a child should do, or——but you know the weight of my hand already, so dread it and be silent."

The poor girl here began to weep, and indeed there were more tear-filled eyes than her own.

"Oh, mother!" she exclaimed, as she kissed her passionately, "think what I suffered upon hearing that cruel woman say I had lost you for ever, and that you had found another child, and cared no more for the little thing you used to caress so fondly, and seem so proud of! But I won't cry any more—no, no, indeed I won't; so dry your eyes, dear mother, and I'll tell you all the rest some other time."

"No, dear—now, now!" said Alyce, appearing quite to understand all that her child was saying.

"Well then, I will; but if anybody cries I shall stop; it was all my fault; I had no business to cry, now I am so happy; and it seems strange, that I, who but yesterday could have checked my tears in an instant, had Nan but looked at me, should now find it so difficult."

Edward took one of her hands and held it kindly within his own, as Anne proceeded. "The woman soon stripped off all my good clothes, and replaced them with complete rags; then making a fire, she burnt everything that had belonged to me. As she sat over the fire, I crept into a dark corner, and crouching down, wept myself fast asleep. When I awoke, I found myself quite alone; the room was large and dark; for a time I knew not where I was. I listened for the falling of the waters; that well-known sound was gone—all seemed in death-like silence; a few rays of the moon stole in at the broken window, which caused such strange forms on the walls and floor, that I screamed with fear. I found the door; it was fastened securely on the outside. Oh! I tremble now whenever I think of that horrid night. All sorts of dreadful fancies came into my mind: I thought, perhaps, I was to be shut up there, and starved to death. I went to the casement; it was very high from the ground—not a sound was to be heard. I watched the moon; it must have been for hours; at last that sank, and I was in total darkness. Presently I fancied I heard a footstep approaching. I cared not who it might be, for it was so dreadful to be alone, that even the presence of my cruel mother, as I was now to believe that woman, seemed a blessing to be coveted; the door opened, and Nan came in.

'Has no one been?' she said; 'I expected them, long ere this.' Nan then lighting a lamp, took out some food from a basket she had brought with her, and placing it on the table gave me some, and desired me to take it with me to my bed, and after eating it, to go to sleep as speedily as I could. She pointed out a place under the stairs, that led to an upper room, in which was a little hay and straw—this was my bed. How I ever lived over that dreadful night seems to me now a wonder, nay, a miracle. Oh! how I thought of my own dear, dear little room; and then I fancied all that you might then be doing; and then I pictured to myself the kind looks that used to be lavished upon me, when we parted for the night, but that were now to be bestowed upon another, and I to be left in that horrid place: with that cruel thought, my heart felt sick with grief. How little did I imagine the trouble you were all in on my account. But why should that woman have stolen me away? can you, dear father, tell the cause?"

"No," said her father; "if you, my dear child, have not been able to discover the reason for that wicked act, it must still remain a mystery. I have never, to my knowledge, wronged a human being."

"That I am sure of, father; but there was one amongst them, when I first was taken away, that appeared to have a dreadful hatred to all in this house."

"And who was he?" enquired the merchant, astonished.

"I never knew his name—but he came to the Clink in the middle of the night with two others; one was Ray the Clipper; the other was wet through and through, as though he had been thrown into the river. I couldn't then understand what they said, for they spoke in a language quite new to my ears—they used the strangest words—but strange as they were, I dare say I could understand them now, for I have had plenty of practice in odd-sounding jargons, only known to those who use them. I watched them from the dark place in which I lay beneath the stairs; now and then I caught some sound that was familiar to me. I heard your name, father, and Edward's; and the tallest of the men seemed delighted when Nan pointed to the spot wherein I lay. And then the tall man kissed Nan, and Ray looked savage. At last they all ascended to the rooms above, and I, worn out with grief, at last fell into a deep slumber.

"The men remained there for some days, but from their anxious looks, and incessant watchings from the casement, it seemed to me that they were fearful of being surprised. There were always mysterious nods and winks, and signs going on between Nan and the Clipper. On the last day I was in that dreadful place, I heard above my head the whole four quarrelling and fighting—oh, it was dreadful to listen to! Presently Ray rushed down the stairs, his face covered with blood; he was pursued by the tall man, who, seizing him just as he had reached the door, hurled him headlong down the long steps, up which I had been so cruelly dragged. I knew how hard they were, and I shuddered as I heard him strike against them in his fall. The woman who was screaming above, and evidently endeavouring to overcome the other man, at last rushed down, frantic, and foaming with rage. 'Have you murdered him?' she exclaimed. 'I hope I have,' was the tall man's reply; 'go to him, wretch,

and if his neck be not broken, no doubt the charm of your fair arms, if flung around it, will soon make all right again.' The woman looked at him as if she could have struck him dead with her eyes—for Nan had the eyes of a tiger when she was in a rage; but this fearful look only caused the man, who seemed to have the strength of a giant, to burst into a violent laugh, and snapping his fingers at Nan, he again ascended to the upper floor."

At this pause, the whole party drew a long breath, but so interested had they become, that as the Bridge-shooter appeared about to speak, the others, as if actuated by a single feeling, placed their fingers upon their lips, fearful of breaking the thread of the child's exciting narrative.

Anne, appearing to comprehend their feelings, continued—"The woman bit her lips, until I saw the blood come from them; then striking her forehead two or three times with her clenched hand, she turned suddenly to where I was crouching in fear; she seized me by the hand, and said, 'Come, come with me—this day shall end my slavery; my heart is now fixed, fixed as a rock—and he shall find it as hard as one, or I will tear it from out my breast, and——But come, come; life or death may hang upon my speed.' I felt relieved at the chance of any change, and as I then thought she was, in truth, my mother, I had already seen enough to know how useless it would be to oppose her, be her commands what'er they might. I started up, and with her hurried from the place. As we descended, we found the stones were spotted all down with blood; this sight seemed to add speed to her steps. We entered beneath the black arch; no one was there; we proceeded further on, when she soon found the object she sought. Ray was seated upon a stone, stanching the blood which flowed from a dreadful wound in his head. 'Ray,' said the woman, 'I have determined; your plans now are mine; this day's work has settled all between us. But tarry not here—he will soon discover my intentions, and then woe to us both if we are overtaken in this vile place.' The rest of my story is soon told," said Anne. "Ray had just bought a show that went from fair to fair. I was made to dance, to sing, to do anything. At last the idea struck Ray, that as a contrast to the monster he had engaged, I should be exhibited as the youthful Venus: they dressed me up in all sorts of finery, and tried to persuade the people (and you have no idea, until you try it, how easily people are persuaded), that my hair was the most beautiful that had ever grown upon mortal head—that my face was the fairest that had ever been placed on mortal shoulders—that my eyes—but you know what stories they tell at fairs; and I was proclaimed to be a perfect angel."

"And so you are, my dear child," said Alyce, kissing her, "you are an angel, for you have been the salvation of my soul."

The poor merchant sighed, as he heard his beloved wife still touching upon that theme, the one on which he knew all her intellect had been wrecked, if not for ever lost.

"Then it was you we saw at the monster show?" exclaimed Flora; "and that was the wretch of a woman who stole you away? I knew it was—I knew it was!"

"And Ray," said Edward, "the Clipper, as you call him, was no doubt the monster I suspected him to be."

"And, oh, gracious!" said the Bridge-shooter, "then it might have been you I heard screaming, as the van passed the house, in its way across the Bridge?"

"It was," replied Anne, in a tone of horror, as she remembered the dreadful beating she had received upon that occasion.

Not one who heard her relate the cruelty she had endured, for having tried to look, but for a moment, at her once-happy home, could stifle their indignation. All were violent in execrating the wretch, Nan.

The merchant, striking the table with his clenched hand, exclaimed, "If I but live, there is not a wretch amongst them that shall not be hunted down, and brought to justice: no, not one of them shall escape my vengeance."

"Oh, yes," said Anne, clinging to her father's arm, "yes, yes, there's one—one who has ever been kind to the poor child, when she thought she had no other friend on earth."

"Kind to you?" said the merchant, "to you, Anne—to you, my poor child? then God's blessing light upon him!—he shall never want again; he shall be rich—he shall be happy, if wealth can make him so—quickly tell me who it was."

"I never heard his real name," replied Anne; "amongst us he was always called the Old Devil."

"The what!" exclaimed every one who heard her.

"The Old Devil," repeated the child, as though there had been no more meaning in the name, than there is in Jack, or Tom, or Bill, or Joe; and indeed as it passed through her lips it seemed to be sanctified, and to lose all its original wicked import.

"And what was the old—gentleman?" said Flora, not possessing courage sufficient to let her lips pronounce such a wicked name.

"Oh, the Old Devil," repeated Anne, "oh, he was Nan's father."

"I thought so," said the Bridge-shooter. "Egad, no one, but the Old Devil, could have had such a child."

"But he was so kind to me," continued Anne; "often and often used he to starve himself, that I might not be hungered. They used to treat him much worse than they did me, for he was old and worn out; and even his daughter, at times, would strike him, and ask him why he did not die—oh, they were very cruel to him! But when we got alone together, and he was not afraid," said the child, quite warming with the subject, and seeming to look back with pleasure to those moments, "he used to make me forget all my misery, and then would he tell me the strange chances of his early life: but he was not bad—indeed he was not, though he used to think he had been; and then he'd teach me to read——"

Here she hesitated for some time, and she then continued—"Yes, I may tell you—he had an old copy I mean one torn and worn, for he told me that there were none yet really old in all England. Yes, he had a tattered copy of the New Testament in our own language, and we used to read it together, and it was so beautiful; and it used to make me

hope and feel so happy whilst we read it. He used to hide it from everybody but from me ; for he told me that he was what they called a heretic, and that if that were known they would tie him to a stake and burn him alive in Smithfield. Now, can you tell me, father, why they should wish to burn the poor old man for being good, and reading the best book, as he said, that ever come upon earth !”

This was a question rather difficult to answer ; so each looked at the other, and all held their peace.

“ He told me too,” she continued, “ that there was a wonderful man beyond the seas, called Luther, who was fighting against the Pope, and that our King Henry had been, I mean in books, fighting against him, and that how God was making Henry, in spite of himself, work like a slave to build up the towers of true faith upon the foundations laid by the very man he professed to despise—the good, the unanswerable Luther. I am still too much of a child to understand exactly what he meant ; but this I understand, that all he said was kind, was charitable, was good.”

“ Ah, me !” sighed Alyce ; “ would that I could bring him back from the error of his ways !”

It is true that this ejaculation emanated from a poor soul partially deprived of sense, otherwise those who heard her might have wondered wherein “ the error of a man’s ways lay, who was kind, was charitable, and good ;” but in those days the name of a sect bore more weight, than the acts of its members, whether good or evil. Alyce had caught the word heretic, and that word, to her benighted mind, contained all errors of the human heart.

Even the good merchant, being still a Roman Catholic, felt a doubt creeping into his heart, like a cancer, to dry up its purest blood, and eat away its vital part, CHARITY ; for he could not yet comprehend how it were possible a heretic could be good. ’Tis true, his sense of gratitude knew no bounds towards the old man who had befriended his child in her affliction ; but then he sighed to think that her benefactor was not of the creed to which he still so firmly, so undoubtingly adhered. His wavering thoughts were made firm, immoveably rooted in his heart, as he learnt that but for that poor old man, he perhaps had never again beheld his long-lost, his unceasingly-prayed-for child ; for Anne now began to detail the circumstances which led to her ultimate return to her dear loved home.

She told them of all that had passed after her mother had so alarmed the people in the show ; all about the changing of the dresses, which at that time she had not been able at all to comprehend : then she described to them how she had listened to Nan and the Clipper, as she peeped from beneath her tent, and had, from their lips, discovered all the truth. “ And, oh,” she said, “ I thought my heart would have betrayed me to them, it beat so loudly, as I heard them own that I was not Nan’s child, but yours. I had often before thought of running away, and coming here to throw myself on my knees, and pray to be your servant, so that might be near you all ; but then, I knew that if that wicked woman were indeed my mother, you could have no power to keep me from her, and I should be used far worse when she got me back again ; but now

now I had learnt the truth, my heart bounded within my breast. I could not rest an instant. I silently tore away part of the covering of my tent, and creeping out, crawled along on my hands and knees, as close as I could to the ground, fearing, in the moonlight I might be seen, and to have been detected at that moment would have cost me my life. I knew that full well. When I believed myself out of their sight, I arose to my feet, and sore and bleeding as they were, I flew across the heath towards the Tybourne Tree; but before I reached it I was once more obliged to hide, for the jingling of our horses' bells told me the rest of our troop were coming. When they had passed, so much worse had my feet become, that I was again compelled to crawl along; and when I thought of the distance I must travel ere I should reach this spot, all hope seemed dying within me. Presently in looking back, my alarm was redoubled, for I could see lights moving about in every direction: my escape had evidently been discovered, and I so near them still. In hopeless despair I threw myself upon the ground at the foot of Tybourne Tree, and prayed to die before they should approach and find me. Nearer and nearer some of them came—then all the lights seemed to recede again towards the spot whence they had started—all but one, and that one came on, and on, slowly, but steadily towards the very spot on which I lay. I thought at that moment I should have gone mad with fright, when suddenly I heard my name called in a feeble voice—'Anne, Anne, if you hear me, answer; I would save you.' So suddenly had hope again revived, that for a moment I could not utter a word; at last, rising upon my knees, I called as loudly as I could—'Grandfather, grandfather, I am here—here,' for it was my only friend, it was the poor old man who had always been so kind to me. 'Heaven be thanked,' he exclaimed, 'that it is I who have found you! Had Nan discovered you, I verily believe she would have beaten you to death. The moment your flight was detected, I guessed at once that you had overheard the very conversation, which I myself had been secretly listening to; feeling that now you knew the truth, there was but one direction you were likely to pursue, I started as swiftly as my worn-out limbs would bear me, straight into the road to London. But you must not lose a moment; yonder lies your way; here is a little money;' and the poor old man put a few pence into my hand. 'Up child, up and away,' he said, assisting me to rise. I was now forced to tell him how impossible it was for me to proceed further. 'Then you are lost,' he said, 'for Nan will not give up the hunt so easily; I know her too well for that. Yet there is a hope still—this tree.' It was Tybourne Tree, a hopeless tree to most, but to me it was my all. I understood him in a moment. He took me in his arms, and as he helped me to his shoulder, he kissed me, and calling upon Heaven to bless my ways, hoped, for my sake, we might never meet again. I felt the tears fall from the poor old man's eyes. I returned his kiss; then standing upon his shoulders, as he supported himself against the trunk of the tree, I exerted all the strength I had, and at last succeeded in reaching the thickly-shading branches. 'On your life,' said the old man, 'stir not until daylight shall show you that we have left the place. God bless you, child! and sometimes think of your poor old friend—pray for him,

for he needs your prayers. Bless thee, child, bless thee! Heaven be thy guard this night!

"I could not bid him good by. I saw by the wavering of his lantern how tottering were his steps; more than once too, 'I saw him raise his hand and pass it across his eyes; he hurried on, and I was left alone; when he was quite gone, I endeavoured to ascend still higher into the tree—the branches were thick and easy to mount, and I almost felt secure. I had not been there any great length of time, when I was nearly falling to the ground from alarm, for two horsemen came from the Edgeware Road, and stopping beneath the tree, revealed to me by their voices that they were the Clipper and another of the troop. I held my breath with fear. I strained my nerves to hold my limbs from trembling, lest the shaking of the boughs should attract their notice—they would doubtless have thought it the wind, but you can little imagine, unless in such a situation, what strange fancies fear will raise up in the mind. Presently they moved on slowly towards our camp, and I felt for a moment relieved and safe; but I was doomed to be yet more alarmed than ever, for ere long I heard the horses' bells, the heavy rumble of the wheels, and soon was made sensible that our whole company was journeying towards the place of my concealment. The line of vans, and carts, and trampers, passed round close beneath the tree—I could hear their voices—and between the leaves could just discern the various parties as they passed. When I thought they had all gone, there was one still loitering behind; it was the old man; I saw him turn his face up towards where I lay concealed—I heard him whisper another blessing—and then again move slowly on.

"I cannot describe to you all the feelings that passed through my mind that night. I knew not whether hope or fear were stronger. At last the daylight began to cast its gray tint all around. I crept lower down, and finding that no human being was near, I ventured to descend to the earth. I tore off part of my dress, and tied the pieces round my feet; this relieved them greatly, and remembering that as we came along the road I had seen a lonely public, I managed, in time, to reach it; the pence the old man had given me, procured for me food, and permission to lie upon some straw in the loft of the stable. Here I slept nearly the whole day—when night again came on I once more began my journey; it seemed endless; every step I took appeared to steal away my nerves; and oh, can I ever forget the painful joy that burst upon my heart, as I first beheld our dear Old London Bridge. So worn out had I become, from anxiety and fear lest I might never reach my home again, that when I stood before the door, I could not raise my hand to knock, nor my voice to cry for help. I felt sick and dizzy, all strength deserted my limbs, and I fell at the threshold of my longed-for home. The rest you know. Oh, another, father! I am so happy, that I feel I could die with joy."

As she said this, she again threw her arms around the neck of her parents, and hugged and kissed every one present, the Bridge-shooter not excepted.

The merchant now began to consider the best course to pursue, in order, if possible, to bring justice home to those who had been guilty of

stealing the child. From what Anne had said, both the merchant and Osborne no longer doubted but that the Clipper was the man whom Edward had at first suspected him to be—namely, one of the three wretches of the marsh; this gave them a further incentive for exertion, and it was settled that not a moment should be lost in obtaining the necessary powers to bring Nan and her paramour to punishment.

"Master," said the Bridge-shooter, who had been very thoughtful for some time, "if I might venture to give an opinion, I should say that where there is a jackal, there is most likely a lion skulking not far behind."

"What mean you," said the merchant, "by such a figure of speech?"

"What I means—mean, I mean," replied the Bridge-shooter, correcting himself, and at the same time giving a sly look at Flora, as much as to say, "come, you have not caught me tripping this time—I was rather too quick for you there;" then continuing, he said, "what I mean is, that there's more in all this trying first to kill Edward, and then robbing you of your child, and then so many thieves coming climbing up to that—you know what I mean—than one would at first think, and so mother thinks, and we've often talked about it; and depend upon it, though she's no witch, she's no fool; I mean, sometimes, and it's she who says the woman was the jackal, and we shall one day find the lion in his den not far off: but says she, 'if ever Mistress Anne should be recovered, let Master Hewet guard her well, for those who have done the wrong once, won't be slow in repeating it if they can.'"

"There is some reason in what you say," replied the merchant, "and indeed I had already determined to keep the whole affair a secret, at least for the present, in order to throw the perpetrators of the crime off their guard, and——"

The whole party were here made to start up, for through the open casement flew something that fell clattering upon the table.

"Gracious! what's that?" exclaimed Flora, after a good scream; then picking up the cause of her alarm, she said, "why, bless me, it's a stone, and round it is tied a paper, and see, there's writing upon it."

The merchant took it from Flora, and untying the string, found the paper was directed to Edward; the writing was in a female hand, and thus it ran:—"The moment you have received this, hurry with all speed to the Southwark end of the Bridge; as you quit the gateway, say, as if to yourself, 'who can have sent it?' the answer you will receive, will at once convince you that nothing but good is intended: take no notice of the speaker, be whom it may, but follow: I dare not say more; many lives depend upon your speed."

The attempt on the marshes, at once recurred to all present, for that had been brought about by an anonymous communication; so to be on the safe side, it was at once determined not to notice this mysterious summons in any way.

The merchant being sent for to his shop descended, telling the Bridge-shooter to go to the barber-surgeon, that he might attend to Edward's wound. In due course the barber arrived, dressed the cut, which he declared, owing to his infallible balsam, would be perfectly healed by the next day.

As all the parties had gone about their various concerns, it was unnoticed for a long time that the Bridge-shooter had not returned. Poor Flora was the first to remark the circumstance, and by degrees became quite alarmed, for William never went any where without it being known to her; she at last found it impossible to keep from the window, where she remained straining her eyes first up the Bridge, then down the Bridge, but still no William could she see. Presently she exclaimed, "Oh, yes, here he comes, and running like a King's horse—what can it mean?" She flew to meet him.

"Where's our master?" enquired William, as he entered the house, quite out of breath.

"In yonder room," said Flora; "but what is the matter?"

The Bridge-shooter, as he hurried to the room behind the shop, replied, "Something that may turn to a serious matter for us all."

When the Bridge-shooter entered the back room he was glad to find Edward with the merchant, so closing the door, that the men in the shop might not hear what he said, "Master!" he exclaimed, "you have not a moment to lose, you must fly."

"What mean you?" ejaculated both the merchant and Edward, at the same moment.

"I mean what I say. In two hours from this time it may be too late. In a few words I can tell you all. You must know that when I had been to Pole-squeeze, the surgeon, my curiosity was such that I could not resist going to the Southwark gate, just to see if any suspicious-looking person were lurking about; the only soul I saw was a poor nun begging, as there is at the corner of every street and lane now. But though there was nobody else, I thought I'd try what charm there was in the words Edward was told to repeat there, so I said, 'Who can have sent it?' The words were scarcely out of my mouth, before the old nun walking past me said softly, 'The Cripple!' she said no more, but at once moved off. I stood for a moment doubtful what to do; but thinking that if the summons really came from the Cripple, there was surely no harm intended, but perhaps much good, I boldly started off after her. I kept at a good distance, but I saw that at every corner she peeped slyly round to see that I was on her track. And now where, of all places in the world, think you she led me to?" William did not wait for an answer to his query, but said—"the very spot where Anne was taken—the black arch of the Clink!"

"Good Heavens!" said the merchant, "are those wretches there again?"

"You shall hear," replied William, and then went on. "Before we arrived there, I began to look suspiciously about, for I liked not the quarters we were in, and when she pushed open the door immediately under the black arch, and entered, I made a dead stop, and was about to let my heels save my throat, for I feared some treachery. 'Do you not know me?' said the nun; 'have you forgotten the Abbess of St. Clair?' She threw back her hood, and then I saw it was she.

"Eoline and her husband are here," she said; "ascend; you'll find them above; you will be as welcome as Edward would have been." I groped

my way up the ruined staircase, and there sure enough, in the room above the archway, I found the Cripple of the Bridge seated on the floor, supporting his blind wife in his arms—she was ill, and appeared almost dying—not a bit of furniture was in the wretched place; no bed, no couch, not even a stool. ‘Why did not Edward come?’ said the Cripple, ‘I would have done as much for him.’ I told him of your hurt, and also of our doubting whether to notice the summons or not, for no name being written, we all feared it was the scheming of an enemy, not the wishes of a friend. I enquired why he was there. ‘Better to be here and starve, than burning in the flames of Smithfield. I forgot, dear child,’ he said, addressing Eoline, who clung closer to him as he spoke of the fire, ‘I forgot thee, dear one; but fear not, we are both safe here, if Edward, or William, have courage to befriend a *heretic*!’ He then told me, what in a degree we already know, that ever since his marriage with Eoline, Horton has been employing every artful scheme to bring about his destruction, and now, as a last effort, he has accused him of heresy, and of what in these days is worse, the denial of the king’s supremacy. ‘But for the poor Abbess of St. Clair,’ said the Cripple, ‘I had ere this have died upon the rack, for if once there, Horton will never let me leave it but through the gates of death. Were I dead, Eoline would be completely in his power, and that is all he aims at.’

‘The fiend!’ exclaimed the merchant; ‘were it but for the sake of Eoline, I will save them both—to her I owe the life of my own dear Alyce—but for Eoline, the burning ruins of the convent had been her grave.’

‘Alas, master!’ rejoined the Bridge-shooter, ‘I fear me much, that all your power will be required to save yourself; the man now serving Horton, was once a dependant of the Abbess; he owed her a deep debt of gratitude, and knowing somewhat of the great interest she takes in all that concerns the blind beauty of the Minorities, he secretly divulged to her the designs of Horton, not only regarding the intended destruction of the Cripple, but also of a warrant of suspicion issued against you and yours. In two hours Horton himself, with his minions, will be here to search the house for unlawful and heretical books.’

‘Horton!’ exclaimed the merchant, ‘he dare not approach this roof; but I will beard the villain, and——’

‘Not for worlds!’ interrupted the Bridge-shooter: ‘no, no; in these times a word may undo a man, and bring him to the flames. The Cripple, who seems to know more than he chooses to divulge, has advised, and his advice I am sure is best—particularly as it is your plan to keep the restoration of your daughter for a time a secret; for her sake, for your own, and for that of one who is more than all to you, your adored wife—yes, he advises that you should secretly leave this place, taking with you your wife and child. All is prepared; even the tide favours your flight; it is now at the drain, so beneath the Bridge I have stationed a covered barge, but light as a feather, with six right honest Southwark lads, that I have known for many a day, and could trust my life with—they will make the barge fly like an arrow through the flood. That even the neighbours may not be aware of your departure, I have thought of a plan by which you may leave your house unseen by any. The

next house, the Cardinal's Hat, will be closed till noon : I have sent the old woman who has the care of it, and who has been dreaming all night of money-bags, and gold, and such stuff, on a fortune-telling scheme up to my old mother ; and while she is gone I promised to act the warder. I can open the trap-door on the roof—by that you can enter, and then descending to the lower room, by the flight of steps that is there, reach the sterling, and embark safely and secretly."

The merchant paused for a moment ere he answered ~~this strange~~, this unexpected proposition ; when suddenly starting up he exclaimed—" It shall be so, for such a scheme will tally well with the plans I have now determined on. Edward and you will guard all here—and for the sake of Eoline, to whom I owe so much, I charge you neglect not to look to her immediate welfare ; consult with the Cripple, and without telling him whence comes the aid, spare not my resources to save them."

As not a moment was to be lost, the reader may imagine the bustle and excitement which now took place. Flora was here, there, and everywhere, and had not the sense of William checked her, she would have collected together nearly the whole contents of the house ; for like most ladies when they are about to go a journey, if but for two days—she kept saying—" But that's a thing we *can't* do without." But although poor Flora said it was impossible to do without this thing, and that thing, and t'other thing, when they did leave the place, she found herself in the possession of scarcely anything but what she stood upright in. When all was prepared, Hewet placed a heavy purse of gold in Edward's hand, bidding him employ it, as he might best judge, according to circumstances as they arose.

Anne was the cleverest of all ; her recent education had given her a great superiority over every one there, in the art of making shift with, or without almost anything.

They ascended to the roof of their own dwelling, and easily passing through that of the Cardinal's Hat soon found themselves in the lower room. The Bridge-shooter lifted the trap-door, the very same through which Horton had entered the place, in the beginning of our tale, and carefully, with the aid of the merchant, succeeded in placing the three females safely beneath the canopy of the barge ; the merchant, as he placed his foot upon the boat, whispered something in the ear of Edward, and then entered the bark.

The tide had by this time turned, and the now gentle fall, caused by the rising of the waters, seemed like the childhood of the cataract, that a few more hours' growth would bring to dread maturity.

The six Southwark lads, the moment the boat had drifted from beneath the Bridge, lowered their oars with one dash into the flood, and then like giants straining every nerve, made the frail bark quiver, as each stroke bore them in triumph o'er the silver flood. •

The moment the boat was gone, Edward and the Bridge-shooter returned to their own abode, and immediately began to make arrangements for the comfort of the Cripple and the blind Eoline.

" The first thing," said the Bridge-shooter, " that the poor souls want, is a bed of some sort, for the hard boards make but a sorry couch for a dying girl to lie on, and Eoline, I fear me, is dying."

"True," replied Edward; "and the one that can be best spared, is that on which I last night slept, in Horton's old room. Make it up in the shape of a bale of cloth, and then no one will wonder at your load."

Not many minutes had elapsed after this arrangement, before the Bridge-shooter might have been seen, carrying a huge bale from his master's shop, and wending his way towards Southwark.

He had not been gone an hour before great excitement was caused, not only in the merchant's shop, but in all that part of the Bridge where Hewet resided, for it was soon bruited from door to door, that officers belonging to the ecclesiastical courts of enquiry had taken possession of the Golden Fleece; and that Horton, who was so well known as being the unscrupulous tool of Cromwell, was come to ferret out heresy, if such a wicked thing could there be found.

When Horton entered, he acted as though he had never seen Edward in all his life before. "Where is your master?" he inquired, in a tone of insolent authority.

Edward was for a moment almost thrown off his guard, for he had not yet arranged any excuse that was likely to be received as a good and sufficient reason for the absence of his master—"Gone", he said, "gone—I know my place too well, to be inquisitive about the movements of the good merchant; he may have gone, and very likely has, to Flanders, for he has a high commission from the King to fulfil, connected with his Grace's intended marriage with the Princess Anne of Cleves."

"Indeed!" replied Horton; and then addressing the officers who accompanied him—"Let not this young man stir from the spot he is in, while I with the searchers commence our duties."

The cause of Horton procuring the warrants of search may easily be guessed at, when we find that the first room he entered was not with the officials, but alone; it was his own old dormitory. The moment he cast his eyes around it—"The furies seize them, I am foiled!" he exclaimed, for he saw at once that all he cared to find was gone; it was the bed, in which was secreted the costly diamond, and those deeds that alone could bring Eoline her rights. Hoping that it might still be found in some other room, he flew over the whole house, the ways of which he knew so well, but failing to discover the lost treasure, he descended to the room in which Edward sat, still guarded; and changing his whole behaviour in the hopes of discovering in what way the old mattress had been disposed of, he ordered his men to leave the place; then turning to his former brother apprentice, he said smilingly, "Edward, I suppose you scarcely knew me when I first came in, for times have wonderfully changed with me since last I entered this abode; and the most painful part of that great change lies in the necessity arising out of my official duties, which compel me to appear harsh and ungrateful to my oldest and dearest friends. I need not tell you how happy I feel, at finding nothing of a dangerous nature here; I have but slightly searched, for I knew it would be so; but yet I was obliged to appear to those about me, that even to such old friends as our good master and yourself, I would shew no undue favour."

Edward felt so disgusted with what he knew to be hypocrisy, that he disdained to make reply.

Horton, who felt this coldness, but not having yet gained his end, would not shew he did so, continued—"Why, Edward, you are lame; no serious accident, I trust?"

"A mere slight cut," replied Edward; "I slept last night in your old room; a thief attempted to enter by the window."

"*Last night?*" exclaimed Horton, with unfeigned surprise.

"Yes," replied Edward; "but he will not trouble us again, for suspect I shot him through the brain, and as I ran towards the little casement, I cut my foot against something sharp, which, upon examination turned out to be a piece of knife that was sticking in the floor, and that seemed stained with blood."

Horton turned away, as he felt his own blood flying from his face, for at that instant every dreadful act that had occurred in that room, flew on the wings of conscience, like a dagger into his heart.

"I was fortunately well provided with arms, for you see we have made that room our armory."

"Yes," said Horton, recovering himself, "you have greatly changed the place, even the old bed is gone; it was a great favourite of mine; I passed many a happy night upon it; where is it now?"

This was a very awkward question for Edward to answer; but before he could make a reply, the Bridge-shooter entered.

"Have you left the bale as directed?" enquired Osborne, with a look of meaning, as he glanced towards Horton.

"Yes, Master Edward," replied William, "and it arrived just in time."

Horton continued, not deigning to notice the Bridge-shooter—"Yes, I would not mind a trifle to obtain that old memento of my happiest days:" here he put on a very sentimental look.

Edward, again giving William a peculiar glance, said, "Master Horton is enquiring after the bed that used to be in his little room below."

"Oh!" said the Bridge-shooter, "that has been burnt I don't know how long—indeed I can't tell when. You see, that superstitious people sometimes don't fancy using a bed again on which a murdered body has been placed, so after Sir Filbut——"

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Horton rising, but his lips were white and quivering, notwithstanding his efforts to appear unconcerned—"Pshaw! if the thing be burnt, why, there's an end of it; and I hardly know why I lost my breath in enquiring about it at all. Osborne, when you communicate with our good master, for I still love to call him such, tell him as gently as you may of this my visit; necessity of duty alone impelled it, but if I can, for his good sake, prevent a further examination into the reports that now are current against him, he may depend upon all my power to shield him." Saying this, Horton with his crew departed from the Bridge.

We must now, for an instant, take a glance at the black arch of the Clink, for here a strange incident occurred, a few nights after the day of which we have been writing. The reader has already been informed that close to the black arch there stood three old dilapidated dwellings; in that over the archway, the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, but now the guardian of that tower and its ghastly heads no longer, had

taken refuge; the other two, when he first took up his abode in that locality, so dangerous to the honest, so safe for the rogue, were empty. The night after he had arrived, as he sat watching the sleeping form of his beloved Eoline, as she lay in a feverish slumber, he thought he heard the sound of voices in the street, or lane below; he peeped from the window, whence he perceived a man and woman with a lantern ascending the large flight of steps before mentioned; they entered the house, and all was still and dark. Two nights after this, the moon had risen with unusual splendour, and in consequence of the aid, stealthily but kindly sent from Edward by the Bridge-shooter, Eoline had so rallied that she with her darling husband was at the casement. He was endeavouring to explain to her the idea of moonlight. The poor Cripple was just about to give up the hopeless task, when suddenly he checked his speech, for Eoline, clinging fearfully to his arm, whispered, "Hush, my soul's love, hush—there are footsteps near!"

The Cripple listened, but no sound could he distinguish.

"Yes, yes," she said, "there are, six—seven—eight feet moving; four of them fall heavier upon the earth than do the others."

The Cripple who, from experience, knew how seldom the blind are deceived regarding sounds, was dumb; presently he too felt convinced that footsteps were approaching. He went to the head of the stairs, and enquired softly of the Abbess, whether the door below was well secured; this question alarming her, she rose from the couch upon which she had lain down for the night, and ascended to their room, where, with the Cripple, she watched from the casement, to learn if possible the reason of the approaching sound; they feared they had been betrayed.

Presently they saw issuing from the arch beneath them four men; the one who seemed the leader of the party appeared to have his head covered with thick bandages of some sort; he was tall and heavily built; the other three bore between them something that resembled the body of a man. Not a word was spoken, but the tall man, who ever and anon placed one hand to his head as if suffering from pain, pointed his commands with the other.

The three men raised their load upright, and it was then evident to the Cripple that what they had brought was a dead body. At the foot of the long flight of steps stood a massive, tall wooden post; to this they tied the corse, in an upright position; the head fell deathlike upon the shoulder; and now the Cripple could discern that from around the dead man's neck hung down the two ends of a rope, as telling the fearful tale of murder by strangulation. While the three men were thus employed, the fourth, he with the bandaged head, was fumbling with an old key in the rusty lock of the door of the house, opposite to that of the steps. When the horrid work performing by the trio was ended, the tall man approaching the dead body, gazed for a moment in its face—then laughed aloud, and spitting at it, he with the other wretches entered the third dwelling, and all again was still.



The Black Arch of the Clank

CHAPTER XIX.

For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
 Aye fleeteth the time—it will no man abide,
 CHAUCER.

NEVER had been seen such crowds of gaily-dressed Southwark lads, and Southwark lasses—Southwark old men, and Southwark dames of antique gait, as ran, or walked, or hobbled over Old London Bridge towards the city on the morning of the nineteenth of February 1547.

By this date, the reader will perceive that our pen has used its plume to good purpose; and, instead of merely running on as fast as hand could drive it, it has actually flown—ay, flown over no less a space of time than eight years, since the closing of our last chapter.

But, before we enter upon the cause of all this gaiety of face and fanciful attire—for, be it known, that every face was smiling, and every dress was new, or newly turned or trimmed, or in some way adorned to fit it for so joyful an occasion—we must, for a moment, reverse our glass, and look back upon events which, although diminished to the eye of the reader as it were to mere specks, may still possess some interest; and, indeed, as connecting links in the chain of our romance, are absolutely necessary to be regarded, if but for a moment.

During these eight years extraordinary changes had taken place, not only in the characters of our tale, but in the historical transactions of our land. Cromwell, as the reader may remember, had fondly hugged himself upon his success in bringing about the marriage of Henry with the protestant princess, Anne of Cleves; but this union was his ruin; for, when Henry beheld her, which he did in the first instance secretly and in disguise, he was so overcome by disappointment at her want, in his eyes, of personal attraction, that it is said he had nearly fallen.

We may easily picture to ourselves the agony Cromwell must have endured upon being summoned into the presence of the king after he had seen the wife his minister had provided him, and when he heard the king's reply, upon his reminding his majesty that he had desired his servants to find him "a fine large woman:" "Yes," said the king, bitterly, "a fine *large* woman; but I did not tell you to bring me a *Flanders mare*."

Great had been the exultation of Gardiner, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Winchester, and all his adherents, at this signal failure on the part of their enemy—Cromwell.

Gardiner, who knew his master well, at once set to work; and, although matters had gone too far for him to prevent the marriage with Anne of Cleves, he hoped soon to bring about a dissolution of that marriage, and to raise one of his own sect to be partaker of the throne. The method he pursued was, to invite the king to his banquets, whereat he placed near him, not a "*Flanders mare*"—not a "*fine large woman*;" but one of the smallest, and at the same time, prettiest creatures in England, Catherine Howard.

Poor Henry, like a foolish moth, flew at once to the light which shone from the brilliant eyes of the artful beauty, and again found the wings of his heart most terribly singed.

Cromwell was now commanded to cause the same parliament, which had no great length of time before, "prayed" the king to take to himself for a wife Anne of Cleves, now to "pry" of him to put her aside ; which these upright honest members of parliament accordingly did.

The ~~Roman~~ Catholics were now exulting at Cromwell's expected fall, but had their hopes for a time greatly damped by finding the king not only continue to trust his former favourite, but actually bestowing upon him, with his own hands, the order of the garter, and then creating him Earl of Essex.

Henry, as in the case of his marriage with Anne Boleyn, wedded Catherine Howard privately ; and it is supposed, the marriage took place on the very same day on which he ordered his faithful servant, Cromwell, to have his head struck off. This execution took place on Tower Hill, on the twenty-eighth of July 1540. Many a poor man's eye dropped a tear to his memory ; for twice a day were no less than two hundred beggars fed at his door in Throgmorton Street.

The death of their patron caused Harry Horton, and his former coadjutor, Spikely, to fly beyond the seas ; for they had been too active against the Romanists to feel in safety now the tide seemed setting against the Protestants, so that for some years we lose sight of them entirely.

In 1541, Henry caused himself to be proclaimed King of Ireland, thus becoming the first English king of that country. Before this date, his title was merely Lord of Ireland.

King Henry appeared to be particularly unfortunate in his numerous matrimonial speculations ; for we find pretty little Catherine Howard, in February 1542, undergoing the same fate on the same spot within the walls of the tower, that had terminated the short and miserable regal career of Anne Boleyn.

It seemed that neither a Romish wife, nor one of the Protestant faith, had sufficient power over her bloodthirsty spouse, to make either side of the balance waver a hair's breadth ; for so nicely, as the historian says, did he trim the scales, that if Dr. Barnes, a celebrated preacher and leader of the Protestant party, "was committed to the torments of the merciless fire," and burnt alive in Smithfield, with Garret and Jerome, as a heretic—in the other scale were to be found Powell, Abel, and Featherston, to be hanged and quartered for denying the king's supremacy. If anything could be done to make these executions more revolting, to both sects, it was the fact of their being coupled—a Protestant with a Catholic on the same hurdle—and thus drawn to the scene of death. Upon this occasion, it is said that a Frenchman exclaimed, "Good God ! how do people make a shift to live here, where Papists are hanged, and Anti-Papists are burnt ?"

We have, fortunately, but few more lines to write concerning the monster, Henry the Eighth.

Some time before he died, he had married his sixth wife, Catherine Parr, who miraculously escaped destruction, although often on its very

brink. Henry had now grown so enormously fat, that it is said he could not pass through any ordinary door, and that machinery was employed, or numerous attendants called in, to aid him in moving from room to room: so diseased had he become, that it was dangerous to approach him. A law had been passed, making it treason, and several persons had been executed, for even supposing the king's death; so that at the last, when all around knew that he was dying, no one dared tell him the fatal truth. So determined did he appear to be, that even his death-bed should be sprinkled with blood, that, perhaps the last act he ever performed was sanctioning the execution of the Duke of Norfolk, uncle of his second wife, Anne Boleyn, as well as of his fifth, Catherine Howard. He was ordered for execution, but was saved by the king dying a few hours before the time appointed for him to have laid his head upon the block.

We will now look back upon the occurrences which took place in the Clink, after the Cripple had witnessed the horrid scene of tying the dead body to the post at the foot of the long flight of steps. His eyes seemed riveted to the horrid spectre. What could be the meaning of such an act? He now began to feel the danger of his own position increasing a hundredfold; for he knew full well, that if the body were found there by the authorities, a searching investigation might *perhaps* take place, and his own concealment be betrayed. How should he act? what could he do? The murderers he knew were close at hand; but even if he had the power to denounce them, his own life, and that of one who was more to him than life, would, at the same moment, be sacrificed." As he was thus musing, "Hush!" again said Eoline, "there is another footstep approaching. Should it be the watch, we are lost: oh, Heaven save us!"

The footstep became louder as it approached beneath the black arch. The Cripple now saw plainly that the four men were watching from the windows of the house they had entered. He was not long kept in suspense, for the scene which followed at once revealed the whole to him. The person who issued from the archway was the same woman whom he had seen with the lantern ascending the steps in company with a man. As she approached the body, she suddenly started; then looking closer—"Heavens and earth!" she said, "'tis the body of a man! what can this mean?" Then raising her lantern towards the face, she uttered a shriek, and exclaimed with anguish, "'Tis he! 'tis he! they have murdered him!" She again was made to start by hearing a shout of laughter behind her; and turning, she saw the four men: he with the bandaged head exclaimed—"We have murdered him, your beautiful Ray, the Clipper! And did you think your husband, because he did not shew his teeth before he knew he could bite, never intended to open his mouth? Ha! ha! Spikely never yet remained unrevenged. Bind her to the same stake," he said, turning to the men; but before they could advance a foot, she had flown up the steps, entered the house, and secured the door within. When they found that she had given them the slip, Spikely's rage became ungovernable. He flew at the door like a bull; but it resisted all his efforts to break it open. He then changed his tone, and pretending to laugh, told her he meant *her* no harm; and that if she would open the door, now he had been revenged on Ray the Clip-

per, all should be forgiven and forgotten. He listened, but received no reply. The Cripple now saw the woman come from the attic window, and creeping along the gutters, pass over several ruinous houses; and then turning round a corner, became hidden from view.

When Spikely had lost all patience at her obstinacy, as he called it, in not opening the door, he began to swear; and vowed, that rather than not reward her as she deserved, he'd fire the whole place, and burn her like a rat. As he was saying this, a lad came hurrying from beneath the arch, and said something in a low quick tone which the Cripple could not distinguish; but, without a moment's delay, the body was unfastened from the post, and as they conveyed it to the house whence they had come, he fancied he heard one of the men say "they could bury it in the cellar beneath the street."

Scarcely a minute had elapsed after they had disappeared before a heavy tramping of feet was heard; and now the Cripple easily guessed the cause of their precipitate retreat—it was the Watch, taking their seldom-performed round.

The Cripple could not help reflecting what strange scenes are often passing within a yard of us, that if we knew of would make our blood almost freeze in our veins.* He dared not speak, and yet he saw the supposed guardians of the laws unconsciously walking over the very spot beneath which a murdered man was at that instant being buried by his assassins. He felt as if he had been equally guilty with the actors in the deed, because he held his peace. His eyes seemed to penetrate through the earth, and look upon the bloody scene at that instant being enacted. At one moment his lips actually moved to raise the alarm, but his eyes falling upon the poor helpless creature at his side, he resisted the impulse and was dumb. The watch passed on; a short time sufficed for the unhallowed sextons to fulfil their task, which, as he guessed, being accomplished, the men again issued from the door; they carefully locked it, and then silently disappeared beneath the black arch.

The next morning the Bridge-shooter brought the poor Cripple the cheering news that Edward Osborne had prepared every thing for their flight. One of his master's vessels was to sail that night for the Netherlands, and aboard which they would be conveyed to a land of safety. It was settled that an hour before the moon should rise, a waggon should be brought as close as safety would allow, to the black arch; that Eoline should be carried by the Bridge-shooter and the Cripple on the matress as she lay, and being placed in the waggon, conveyed some distance on the road to Greenwich, where a boat would be in readiness to bear them all to the merchant's vessel.

As the hour approached for carrying the scheme into execution, Edward and the Bridge-shooter were somewhat surprised by the Lord Mayor appearing, mounted, in full harness; the Sheriffs too followed, and behind them came some hundreds of armed men. The Southwark-gate was closed; the towers were manned, as indeed were all the roofs of the houses at that end of the Bridge. This warlike movement, which was one of not infrequent occurrence, was now rendered necessary in consequence of the report brought in by the watch which the Cripple had seen the night before passing through the Clink. It appeared that the

"Bishop of Winchester's birds," for that was the name by which the ruffians who, as it were, took sanctuary in the Clink or the Mint, were known, had fixed upon that night to make a foray into the city, for the purpose of robbery. Southwark and Lambeth had both, in former times, been the receptacles of the greater part of the vice and immorality of London. So little power had the Lord Mayor over this district, that, although to protect the city, he would, with his armed bands, watch for a whole night upon the Bridge, he seldom ventured to attack the thieves in their strong-hold. What a strange and lawless state of things does this picture present to view!

The one half of the Bridge being choked up with soldiers, and the gates closed, Edward and the Bridge-shooter were compelled to reach Southwark by a different route: fortunately their waggon had already passed over the Bridge; so, hurrying through the city to Paul's Wharf, they there took boat, and proceeded towards the opposite shore.

The night was gloomy; though not so dark but that they could see quite enough to convince them that the "Bishop of Winchester's birds" were not easily to be thwarted by any Lord Mayor, be he as cunning as he might; for suddenly they found themselves surrounded by, at least, fifty boats, all crowded with thieves.

It was indeed a lucky thing for the safety of their project, as well as their own, that the Bridge-shooter's early education had been attended to by instructors not quite so respectable as Flora Gray, or they might have been, in all probability, detained the whole night as prisoners; or, perchance, robbed and murdered outright. More than a dozen times were they called to in a manner, that, had Edward been alone, would have proved unanswerable—at least by him.

"Fish or fowl?" was the invariable question; to which the Bridge-shooter, imitating his former vulgar tone of voice, replied—"Birds all! birds all!"

"What can this mean?" said Osborne in a whisper to William.

"You'll know to-morrow, Master Edward, depend upon that," said the Bridge-shooter. "How this does remind one of old times, to be sure. When I was a boy, I had no idea of there being any harm in it."

"In what?" enquired Osborne.

"Vy, you see—lord love me! if these beauties have not made me forget all my gentility—did you hear my V? I'm glad Flora was not here. Why, you see, Master Edward, that every one of these boats is filled with thieves, who, finding their scheme upon London has been blown, are now on their way, while the Lord Mayor is dozing on the Bridge, just to go and open the eyes of the good folk of Westminster: it's an old trick, but one that seldom fails: you'll hear of five hundred robberies to-morrow, and many a Bird now chirping here, will be hung up with his feathers on before the week's out: but what of that? they're so used to it, that if nine out of every ten fly off without their throats getting the squeeze, they're as merry as larks."

The boats of their disreputable neighbours having left the way clear, they soon effected a safe landing, and by the aid of the Bridge-shooter's local knowledge, were in a few minutes at the door beneath the black

arch. So much beyond the appointed time had been their arrival, that the Cripple of the Bridge had nearly exhausted all the excuses he could invent to appease the fears of Eoline, or as likely to have been the cause of his friend's delay; when all alarm was set at rest by Osborne's entrance.

All had long been in readiness in that wretched abode. The poor Abbess had put on every piece of clothing she possessed, as being the easier mode of carrying her now scanty wardrobe. Eoline had been already brought from the room above, and was lying upon the mattress, warmly wrapped in one of Merchant Hewet's furred gowns, which Edward had sent for the purpose.

There being no reason for delay, but every reason for immediate flight, Eoline as she lay, was borne between them, and thus they left the place. As they came out, the Bridge-shooter pointing to the house with the steps, whispered to Edward, "that is the place—it was up those horrid steps poor Anne was dragged, the night she was lost."

Osborne would gladly have waited a few moments to have examined the spot more minutely, but as the moon began to send forth her feeble rays, to announce her near approach, it was more prudent to push onwards as speedily as possible. Not far from the arch they found the expected waggon, and now all were fairly on their way; everything turned out propitiously; and in an hour more, the Cripple with his Eoline and the Abbess were safely on board the good merchant's vessel; the anchor was weighed, the sails were set, and Eoline dropping tears of gratitude from her poor sightless eyes upon the hand of Osborne, as she fervently pressed it to her lips, breathed a heartfelt prayer for him and all he might ever love. A minute more, and the last "God speed you" was heard, and the vessel began to move majestically upon its dangerous course.

While these incidents were performing, Master Hewet, with his Alyce and his newly-found daughter, the lovely Anne, and Flora Gray, had arrived safely at Putney. Here, by the assistance of old Cromwell, he was at once enabled to settle in a most beautiful retreat, and taking the name of Allen, the better to throw his enemies off the scent, he began to lay out his plans for the future happiness of those dependent upon him. Innocent as he knew himself to have ever been regarding his religious views, still, even the accusation of heresy, in such times, was a thing not to be regarded with indifference; it was, therefore, with infinite satisfaction he heard Edward Osborne's account of the interview he had had with Horton.

His principal anxiety now became to discover, if possible, some clue to the secret enmity, which evidently was ever on the watch to injure him. The exertions he had made, had been the cause of the celebrated monster show dissolving of itself; its elements were scattered here, there, and everywhere. Nothing could be heard of Nan, nor the Clipper, nor of one whom he would most kindly have protected, and have rewarded munificently—the old man who had befriended his child. As there had been an educational establishment settled close at hand, the governants of which, formerly nuns, but who had ever born a character of high repute, not only for virtue and sanctity, but for great learning, he immediately determined to continue his wife and child where they were, until Anne had finished her educa-

tion; and he was the more inclined to this arrangement, for he had every wish that the strange incidents of Anne's late way of life, should be, if possible, buried in oblivion.

The next few years, proved to the merchant one uninterrupted course of prosperity and happiness. Alyce's mind, day by day, became more fixed, and had indeed so apparently returned to its former tone, that unless it were shaken by touching upon one certain string, no indication of weakness would at all appear: there was another reason for the merchant not wishing to take his dear Alyce again to the Bridge, and that was, the fact of the *ci-devant* saintly Father Brassinjaw, having become the landlord of the next house, the Cardinal's Hat. It is true, that Alyce might not have recognised her former confessor, now he had let his hair and whiskers grow, but she never could have gone to her window without her eyes being shocked by the sight of his well-known, but dreaded name; for he had most ostentatiously proclaimed his new calling, by having painted, in enormous letters, under the sign of the Cardinal's Hat, "BRASSINJAW, VINTNER;" to which was appended this exquisite distich:—

"Come, come,
And taste my stum!"

Every Saturday afternoon, Edward and the Bridge-shooter rowed their master, in a beautiful light barge he had had built on purpose, up to the cottage of the heath—that is to say, to the ferry—for the cottage stood at some distance inland. Here they were always met by Dame Allen, as Alyce was now called, with her daughter and Flora, and never was six more happy countenances to be met with, than those that now smiled upon each other.

As they strolled homewards, the party invariably divided into three couples, admirably assorted. The merchant, with his wife's arm through his own, took the lead, then followed Edward and Anne, and last—at much greater distance than the other four kept apart—followed William and Flora. Notwithstanding the distance they were away, those before them more than once had heard Flora exclaim, "Don't be a fool, William, you'll make me cross if you do that again." What William had been doing, or attempting to do, upon such occasions, has never been divulged, so we must be excused for not recording it.

Early on the Monday mornings, the same little party were again seen on the same spot, their faces beaming with equal kindness, but lacking slightly the joyousness of the Saturday at eve, for now it was the merchant that followed his two trusty serviteurs into the barge; and each, and all, having bade adieu, was once more on his way to Old London Bridge.

The three females always remained on the shore, watching the receding bark, until a bend in the river was about to hide it from their view; at this point the merchant invariably stood up in the boat, and waved his cap to those whom he had left. Edward and the Bridge-shooter took their oars from the flood, and raising them upright, moved them in the air as token of a last adieu; three scarves were now seen waving from the shore; the oars again descended to the flood, and they were gone.

Alyce then went upon her visits of charity; Anne to her studies; and Flora to think, we fear, much more of the Bridge-shooter than of her household affairs.

Having now explained how matters had sped during the years gone by, we will take up the thread of our narrative from the nineteenth of February, 1547; for as we have before said, at that epoch we have now arrived.

CHAPTER XX.

*And on the morrow when the day 'gan spring,
Of horse and harness, noise and clattering
There was in the hostelerie all about,
And to the palace rode there many a rout
Of lordes, upon steeds and palfreys.—CHAUCEER.*

Yes, yes, merry and mad, and mad indeed, and merry, were the crowds that passed over Old London Bridge on the nineteenth of February, 1547. Was it because the great bell had already tolled the funeral knell of the tyrant, King Henry the Eighth, and thus gave hope that the flames of Smithfield would at once be quenched; and that ropes which had so long been used to hang up men, might now be made into bell-pulls, to ring out merry peals withal?

This feeling no doubt had its weight with many minds, and might be said to be the first cause of the apparent jollity, for the death of Henry had placed another upon the throne, and that other was upon the morrow to be crowned. Yes, Edward the Sixth, although a boy scarcely past his ninth year of age, was now King of England.

The coronation being fixed for the twentieth of February, it was arranged that on the nineteenth, the day we are writing about, Edward should pass in grand procession from the Tower, through the city of London, and sleep that night in his city of Westminster, preparatory to his coronation in Westminster Abbey on the following day. It was to enjoy the magnificence of this procession, that the worthy citizens were all astir betimes; and to do full honour to the young King, every scrap of finery they could lay hands on was brought into requisition, and most ostentatiously displayed, either on their own backs, or upon the fronts of their own houses.

The roads, throughout the whole line of procession, were, soon after break of day being rendered bright and smooth, by hundreds of waggon-loads of fine gravel arriving from the country, and being strewn over the ground.

Busy indeed had been the various handicrafts during the whole night; some building up scaffolding before the houses, others decorating those already built; windows were being removed, and soft cushions placed on the sills, from which hung out, down the fronts of the dwellings, cloths of the gayest colours; whilst the richer citizens decked their houses from top to bottom with cloth of arras, gold, or silver. Evergreens were in endless profusion.

One side of the way from Grasse-Church Street, to the Little Conduit of Cheap, was railed off. Behind these rails were to be arranged all the city crafts, with the aldermen at the extreme end by the Conduit.

Checklocke, the smith of the Bridge, was particularly busy ; he had men here, there, and everywhere, but there was something very mysterious about his own actions. Not even his dear friend Catchemayde, no, nor Silkworm neither, were let into the secret. The sharp-nosed little arrow-maker pretended, but it was mere pretence, that his nose had been sharp enough to smell out a portion of the hidden wonder, but what he had discovered, not even Master Brassinjaw, late the saintly father of that name, but now mine host of the Cardinal's Hat, could tempt him to confess. All he did, when hard pressed, was to imitate Checklocke, and nodding his head with a wink, exclaim, " You'll see, you'll see."

From daybreak, which, this being February, was not very early—for the goddess of the day being, like most people at this time of year, rather a sluggard, could not be tempted to open her bright blue eyes, until the clock had sounded no less than seven times since midnight—yes, from break of day, had Checklocke been anxiously watching from one of the three openings on the Bridge, for the arrival of some vessel. At last, turning triumphantly to his anxious friends, he exclaimed, " Come along, lads ! come along, for now—you'll see."

The four at once left the Bridge, and hurried down to the Steel Yard—the great wharf belonging to the foreign merchants, where all sorts of things were landed or shipped, and where the government bought their gunpowder, for as yet that destructive article was not manufactured in England ; nor indeed were those dread instruments for its use—the iron-throated cannon, yet made here. It was not until some time after Edward came to the throne, that the first iron cannon was founded in this country, and that was by a Frenchman, the English field ordnance being previously constructed of leather, or wood hooped round with iron.

When they arrived at the Steel Yard, Checklocke's friends were still kept in as much doubt as ever. The people belonging to the wharf were soon busy in harnessing some strong Flanders horses to a clumsy four-wheeled low sort of truck. By the time this was done, a heavy boat, or lighter, shot through the Bridge, and was soon after safely secured to the wharf. A part of the mystery was now solved ; for, from this boat the cranes began slowly to raise an enormous anchor, which, being brought to a proper height, the cranes were turned inwards ; the anchor began again to descend, and was soon resting safely upon the truck.

" Come, Master Checklocke," said Catchemayde, rather pettishly, " tell us, nan, tell us at once what you are about ! for what you can possibly want to do with that huge anchor, I think would puzzle old Sharp-nose there to divine : so divulge—divulge, friend Checke."

The only reply he received was, " You'll see ;" which reply was, of course, once more echoed by the little arrow-maker.

Creak went the solid wheels—slash went the carter's whip—a few long oaths were added to each cut ; and the vehicle, with its mysterious load, began to move away.

The place to which the anchor was taken, appeared to be about the

last in England where one would have thought such a machine could possibly be put to any use—this was St. Paul's Church-yard! Catchemayde became more pettish and cross at every step; and when they had arrived just before the door of the dean's dwelling, he burst out in a perfect rage—"He was not going to be treated so—he was not a child, and he'd be d——d if he'd stand it." Now, whether it was a punishment for his swearing, or a mere accident, we know not; but certainly he suited the "action to the word;" for, instead of standing it, he fell headlong into a large hole that had been dug close to the dean's door. Out of this hole poor Catchemayde was soon dragged; and into that hole the anchor was soon lowered, and embedded firmly in the earth.

For what purpose this emblem of hope had been there placed, the reader, by and by, will be made acquainted.

Now began all over London, the ringing of bells; but the bells, to hear which, crowds upon crowds were seen hurrying, were those of Shoreditch: these bells long maintained their celebrity, and were such great favourites with Queen Elizabeth, that she never passed them without making a long halt to listen to their music—the people, all bare-headed, kneeling round her.

Few of our readers are, perhaps, aware of the sacred honours that bells had, in our Roman-Catholic times, conferred upon them. Can it scarcely now be believed, that, before a bell could be hung up in a steeple, it had to be first subjected to the holy rite of baptism? But such really was the case. The baptism was performed either by the bishop or his deputy. Most of the forms prescribed for the baptism of a child, were gone through in giving a name to the bell.

The bishop and priests washed it in water, anointed it in the name of the Holy Trinity; it had Godfathers, who were persons of high rank. Holy water, oil, salt, and cream were used, and tapers burnt. The bell was crossed by the Bishop, and even more psalms were read at this performance, than there were at the christening of an infant.

Bells were supposed to possess, after being duly christened, an enormous power over evil spirits; also over the elements; thunder and lightning were dreadfully afraid of bells: but the following prayer, which was offered up for the bell, will let the reader understand at once what was hoped and expected from it; thus ran the prayer:—

"Lord, grant that wheresoever this holy bell, thus washed and blessed, shall sound, all deceits of Satan, all dangers of whirlwind, thunders, lightnings, and tempests, may be driven away, and that devotion may increase in Christian men when they hear it. O Lord, sanctify it by thy Holy Spirit; that when it sounds in thy people's ears they may adore Thee! May their faith and devotion increase, the devil be afraid, and tremble, and fly, at the sound of it. O Lord, pour upon it thy heavenly blessing! that the fiery darts of the devil may be made to fly backwards at the sound thereof—that it may deliver from danger of wind and thunder. And grant, Lord, that all that come to the church at the sound of it, may be free from all temptations of the devil. O Lord, infuse into it the heavenly dew of thy Holy Ghost, that the devil may always fly away before the sound of it, &c., &c."

Henry the Eighth, appears to have had as little respect for holy

bells, as he had for the Pope, for we find that the four largest in England, called Jesus's bells, which hung in the Clock-house near St. Paul's, were stolen by him against one hundred pounds, and lost to Sir Miles Partridge, at a cast of dice.

We are not very much astonished at evil spirits, supposing them to have ears, being frightened at the sound, for even now there are in the city one or two peals of bells, that, when they ring their loudest all at once, are enough to frighten old Nick himself.

But on the occasion we are recording, bad spirits were not even thought of; oh, no! the ringings were to put people into good spirits, and merry peals, indeed, now sounded from every steeple.

The Shoreditch youths, for be it known that bell-ringers, like post-boys, always retain their cognomen of juvenility, no matter what their real age may be—yes, the Shoreditch youths, upon this occasion, were to outdo all their former outdoings, and so they did, for they executed a complete peal of *grandsire triples*!—yes, *grandsire triples*, in which peal there were no less than five thousand and forty changes.

We must confess we are happy that we were not there to hear them, for, notwithstanding, that each of the eight old youths worked away like a steam engine, the performance took three hours and six minutes.

The sound of cannon now boomed from the Tower walls; this was the signal for all who were to participate in the gorgeous procession, to hasten to their respective stations. The city crafts took their position behind the rails before mentioned, and with their heads uncovered, stood like so many statues awaiting the kingly spirit to come and conjure them into moving beings. Their flat caps, for out of compliment to the young King, who had always worn a cap of this description, the like of which may be seen in these days, generally under the arms, not on the heads, of our blue-coat boys, had been substituted for those of older fashion, and now hung by a string on their backs like so many large muffins.

On the opposite side of the way were lines of priests and clerks, with their crosses and censors; they wore their richest vestments, and splendid indeed was the effect they produced. Streamers and banners floated in the breeze, as they hung down from lines stretched across the streets.

Exactly at one of the clock, an enormous roaring of cannon was heard, which told the anxious expectants that the procession had commenced. Bands of trumpeters, and drum-blades, and indeed of almost every musical instrument then known, were placed at stated distances, so that as the procession moved onwards, there was music heard throughout the whole line.

First came the King's messengers, two and two; then followed bands of gentlemen, and Ambassadors' retainers, all two and two. Next came whole crowds of chaplains, but these were as yet without dignity; and next to them, gaily prancing upon richly-caparisoned steeds, came the sons of gentlemen and noblemen. Then advanced the great Barons, all arranged after their estate. The Bishops followed, attired in all their gorgeous vestments; then the younger sons of Earls, Marquises, and Dukes, succeeded by the Earls, Marquises and Dukes themselves. The Comptroller of the household, with the secretary of Venice. The Treasurer of the King's house, with one of the Ambassadors of the Protestants.

The King's Almoner, with another of the Ambassadors of the Protestants. These were followed by Sir William Paget, Secretary of State, with Duke Philip of Almaine. The Lord Admiral accompanied one of the Scotch Ambassadors; the Lord Privy Seal another. The Lord Great Master of the Household (Sir William Poulet, Lord St. John, soon after Lord Chancellor, and subsequently the first Marquis of Winchester), did honour to Poley, Baron de le Garde, of France. The Lord Chancellor, with the French King's Ambassador, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the Emperor's Ambassador, came next; these were followed by Sir Percival Hart, Knight Harbinger, bearing the King's cloak and hat. The next that came were two Gentlemen Ushers, John Norryes, and William Rainsford, representing the two estates of Normandy and Guienne, clothed in robes of scarlet furred with minever, wearing caps of state on their heads, and carrying about them, in baudrick-wise, two mantles of scarlet velvet: Garter, in the king's coat of arms on the right hand, and the Mayor of London carrying a mace, on the left. Sergeants at arms, with their maces, going on either side of the way. Then followed the Lord Marquis of Dorset, the Constable of England, bearing the sword; on his right hand was the Earl of Warwick, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, and on his left, the Earl of Arundel, the Lord Chamberlain, supplying the room of Earl Marshal; in lieu of the Lord Protector, the Duke of Somerset, who came next attending upon Edward.

The populace set up a shout of delight that rent the air: the incense was waving in every direction, and scenting the breeze with holy perfume.

The King had now left the Tower Gate. In order that his loving subjects might the better view his person, he rode a step or two in advance of the sumptuous square canopy. His Highness was richly apparelled in a gown of cloth of silver, all over embroidered with damask gold; he wore a girdle of white velvet, wrought with Venice silver and precious stones, such as rubies and diamonds, with true-love knots of pearls, and a doublet of white velvet according to the same, embroidered with Venice silver, and garnished in like manner with precious stones and pearls; his cap and buskins were also of white velvet, and in like manner adorned. His horse was caparisoned with crimson satin, richly ornamented with pearls and damask gold. His Highness's footmen, in rich coats, going about His Grace, on either side of the canopy, which was borne by six knights, who had certain assistants really to bear the load. Behind the King came Sir Anthony Brown, Master of the Horse, leading a goodly courser of honour, very richly trapped.

Nine henchmen now came prancing on, mounted on sturdy steeds, with saddles of state, riding bare-headed, and appareled in cassocks, parted in the midst, one half cloth of gold, the other cloth of silver, and their horses adorned with trappings of the same. Then Sir Francis Bryant, master of the henchmen came riding alone; next the gentlemen and grooms of the Privy Chamber, on horseback two and two; the pensioners and men at arms, with their pole-axes, going on either side of the way, on foot, with their halberts in their hands.

All the servants belonging to noblemen and gentlemen now followed in order, after the degrees and estates of their masters.

As the King's Highness entered Mark Lane, a tremendous peal of ordnance was shot at the Tower. In Fenchurch Street, was a scaffolding, richly hung with cloth of arras, and therein divers singing men and children, singing and playing upon the regalls as the King's Highness came by.

At the Conduit on Cornhill was a pageant, hung and garnished with arras, whereon was put a proper conduit, which continually ran with sweet wine. On the same pageant were divers instruments and goodly singing; and two children pronounced to the King's Highness two poetical speeches; and then was sung the following stanzas, the God Save the King of those days:—

King Edward, King Edward,
 God save King Edward,
 God save King Edward,
 King Edward the Sixth—
 To have the sword,
 His subjects to defend,
 His enemies to put down
 According to right in every town.
 And long to continue
 In grace and virtue,
 Unto God's pleasure,
 His Commons to rejoice!
 Whom we ought to honour, to love, and dread,
 As our most noble King,
 And sovereign Lord,
 Next unto God, of England and Ireland the supreme head;
 Whom God hath chosen
 By his mercy so good.
 Good Lord in Heaven, to thee we sing,
 Grant our noble King to reign and spring,
 From age to age,
 Like Solomon the sage,
 Whom God preserves in peace and verre,
 And safely keep from all danger.

This song gave infinite delight to the public, who shouted the last two lines in full chorus.

The boy-king was next greatly amused by two persons at the entrance of the conduit in Cheap, representing the still well-known characters of Valentine and Orson. The one was dressed in full harness, that is, armour; the other was entirely covered with moss. These two worthies also addressed the king. At the same conduit was a sumptuous fountain, upon which rested an imperial crown. The whole was garnished with roses (we presume, artificial), and julflovers. From this fountain descended through various pipes, sweet wine and claret, which ran plenteously for six hours.

Ah, how busily employed had been the saintly Father, we mean, Master Brassinjaw, for the greater part of that long time! What a blessing for mine host of the Cardinal's Hat! At some little distance, so that he might not attract too much notice, he had prepared large barrels upon wheels, and here he himself remained, while all the little boys he could engage in his service by a few farthings and promises of pence, were continually running from the fountain with pots of wine, which he emptied into the said barrels; and then, with a virtuous exhortation to

the "little dears to be diligent," he sent the bearers with their empty jugs, back to the fountain.

The few persons who were remaining at home on the Bridge were astonished to see the enormous stock of wine Master Brassinjaw was laying in, never dreaming for a moment that the king's royal grace was the wine merchant with whom Brassinjaw was dealing so largely.

"Ah!" said Brassinjaw, as he chalked up another score, which meant another barrel, against the wall of the dark court wherein he had ensconced himself, "Ah! by pretty St. Afra, but we have a king at last—a real king—a noble king—a virtuous king—a Protestant king!" or something like it.

Poor Brassinjaw had actually slipped into protestantism, he knew not how, when, or wherefore; nor did he seem to think it worth the trouble of asking himself the question; but why he should have called upon the Romish Saint Afra at such a moment, it were difficult to divine, unless, indeed, he being a vintner, it was because she had been suffocated by the smoke from vine leaves.

St. Afra was an abandoned woman; but having refused to sacrifice to the heathen deities at Augsburg, in the time of Dioclesian, she, with several of her companions, were tied to a stake and destroyed by suffocation, as above stated.

Brassinjaw's exertions were for a time put a stop to by the approach of the King, who halted near this fountain to hear the short addresses from four children, richly adorned, representing Grace, Nature, Fortune, and Charity. He then listened to others who personified Sapience, and the seven liberal Sciences—Grammar, Logic, Arithmetic, Rhetoric, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. A little further on was a most splendid dumb show, which is thus described—

"A double scaffold was hung with cloth of gold and silk, besides rich arras. In the upper stage was devised an element of heaven, with sun, stars, and clouds, very naturally. From this part there was spread abroad another lesser cloud of white sarcenet, fringed with silk, powdered with stars and beams of gold, out of which there descended a phoenix down to the nether scaffold, where, sitting herself upon a mount, there spread forth roses, white and red, julflovers, and hawthorn boughs. After the phoenix had been there a little, there approached a lion of gold, crowned, making semblance of amity unto a bird, moving his head sundry times; between the which familiarity, as it seemed, there came forth a young lion, that had a crown imperial, brought from heaven above, as by two angels, which they set upon his head. Then the old lion and phoenix vanished away, leaving the young lion, being crowned, alone."

The king was told that this recondite device was to signify, by the virtue of the lion, that he was descended lineally, through God's provision, and his divine power, to succeed Henry the Eighth, so that from this we are to regard the phoenix as Jane Seymour, and the old lion, bluff King Hal—we think an old bear would have been more appropriate. But the allegorical representation did not end here, for we find that "the young monarch was himself personified in the lower scaffold, by a child apparelled with rich cloth of gold, and a robe of crimson satin, and seated upon a throne, which was upheld by four

other children, representing REGALTY, having a sceptre in his hand; JUSTICE, with a sword; TRUTH, with a book; and MERCY, with a 'little curtain,' or pointless sword.

This was certainly an elegant and pretty device, and, as the four children uttered good sense and good advice, this pageant might be approved, although most of these shows were nonsensical in the extreme.

REGALTY, addressing the king, said, "Rule and govern prudently"—then JUSTICE, taking the next turn, observed, "And do justice condignly"—which was immediately followed by MERCY, saying "But mix with mercy"—"that the truth may stand surely," said TRUTH, "and your throne may endure permanently."

It would be tedious to describe all the mummeries that were placed in the road to solace the King's Highness—we will merely mention the Golden Fleece, guarded by two bulls and a serpent, casting out flames of fire from their mouths; so, the standard of Cheap, with the trumpeters on the upper part; but at the Cross in Cheap, or a little beyond, we must halt for a moment, for it was here the king received, perhaps, what appeared to him the pleasantest token of his people's affection, namely, a purse with a thousand marks of gold in it, presented by the mayor, attended by the recorder, the chamberlain, and the aldermen.

On went the procession to the little conduit, where another pageant had been prepared, and is thus described—"The conduit was hung with cloth of arras, and garnished with the shield of St. George, the king's arms, six great streamers, twenty small banners, and twenty-four targets; in a tower at the top the waits playing; and an old man sitting in a chair, apparelled with a gown of cloth of gold—a crown on his head—in his right hand a sceptre, and in his left a ball and cross, represented King Edward the Confessor. Before him lay a lion, which, by means of *vices*, moved its head. Here also, at the foot of the conduit, was a pageant of St. George, who was represented on horseback, in complete harness, and his page in harness also, holding his spear and shield; and a fair maiden, holding a lamb in a string. "St. George was to have made a speech," so Leland tells us, "and a child an oration in Latin;" but the poor king, being already heartily tired of such shows, passed on so quickly, that the poet and the actors were doomed to a sad disappointment. There was a song, a very long one, of which the last lines were sung in chorus, and ran thus—

- “Sing up, heart, sing up, heart, sing no more down;
- But joy in King Edward that weareth the crown.”

The procession had now entered St. Paul's Churchyard, and here the mystery of the buried anchor was made manifest; for to it was attached one end of an enormous rope or cable, the other end of which was secured to the battlements of the steeple of St. Paul's. Upon the approach of the king's grace, a man, a native of Arragon, who had been secreted in the steeple, suddenly cast himself headlong down upon the rope, and with arms and legs extended, slid from the battlements to the very feet of the king; these he kissed, and having uttered a few words, ran up the rope again, until he was exactly over the centre of the churchyard; here he began to dance, and perform sundry "mysteries." His

last feat was to attach a small rope to his right ankle, and by it hang, head downwards, to the great delight and wonder of the king and his sight-loving subjects. He soon recovered himself, and then descended, amidst the plaudits of the gaping throng.

By this we see that rope dancing was as well understood three hundred years ago as at the present day.

The Great Conduit in Fleet Street was the next attraction, where a pageant was also set up, and children appeared in the favourite characters of Truth, Faith, and Justice. As soon as the king had passed, hogsheads of wine were made to run, and then the scramble for the precious juice began.

The last show was at Temple Bar. The gates had been painted in fanciful colours, and the battlements hung, as usual, with rich cloths of arras. Fourteen standards of flags were there, and eight trumpeters—all Frenchmen, who blew their instruments in a fashion known only in their own country. Here the good citizens took a loving farewell of their king, and the procession passed on to Westminster without further interruption.

"Well," said Checklocke to his three friends, who, with himself, were all arm-in-arm, now strolling back again from Temple Bar towards their home upon the Bridge, "well, what did you think of my contrivance of the anchor to fix the rope to, eh?"

"Not half so much as I did," replied Catchemayde, "of the contrivance by which the foreign fellow flew down from the steeple. It was an awful sight; but these Foreigners are such clever devils. Now, none of us stupid English could do any thing half so wondrous as that. Did you see how he hung by his foot? If we hang to a rope at all, it's always by our necks, which is uncommonly bad for the health."

As they were passing through Ludgate, still arm-in-arm, and, consequently, filling nearly the whole gateway, they had to separate rather suddenly, to prevent themselves from being run over.

"Hollo!" exclaimed Silkworm, looking up saucily at the rider, "you're an uncommon great man, I'm thinking, to put your horse thus impudently in my way!"

"And you're an uncommon stupid man, I'm thinking," replied the rider, "to put yourself in the way of my horse; but no offence, neighbours all, I saw ye not until upon you; so God speed ye, and God speed me, and thus we part in amity."

Saying this, the rider, who had a lady behind him, thickly veiled, put spurs to his steed and trotted away; he was followed by another cavalier also with a lady thickly veiled; behind him came a third, and he likewise had a lady with a veil, who clung very tightly to him, as the courser, which was a rather high trotter, bounded along.

"Hang me if I knew him, till he spoke!" said Silkworm.

"What!" ejaculated Catchemayde, "not know neighbour Hewet? but I wonder who the fair one was in the pillion behind him. I haven't heard of his getting married again, have you?"

"No," replied the sharp-nosed arrow-maker, "nor no one else, nor have I ever heard that his first wife's dead—it's true she has never been

on the Bridge for these eight years ago, but that's no proof—at least I take it, it would not be so in law—think you it would?"

"I'm not thinking of that, nor of her, nor of him," said Checklocke, "but of that fairy-like figure behind Master Osborne. What a waist! why, a wasp might die of envy at it; and, neighbours, did ye see, as the wind cast her dress aside, did ye see her foot? Stirrup never was blessed with such a foot before, I swear. Why, with such a foot as that, I'd be kicked into a blue moon every day, from this to Candlemas. And did you observe Master Edward? why, the clod! he seemed to take no more care of her than if she'd been a bundle of hay tied up behind him. I'd have given a silver penny to have been in his place, to have had those pretty arms round my waist, only I'm afraid that we should both have tumbled off, for I'm so uncommon ticklish in the ribs."

"Master William, the Bridge-shooter, did not seem so," observed the sharp-nosed arrow-maker, "for never did lady of the pillion tug so tightly at her horseman as did she behind him; I think that must have been Flora Gray; but if so, she's stouter than she used to be some years ago. Lord, lord, how time does fly! why, we haven't seen Flora Gray on the Bridge these eight years. I wonder what the merchant's whim is for keeping his women away so?"

"Because he's getting too rich, and they too proud," observed Catchemayde, "to be satisfied with the old dwelling on the Bridge. Like all your grand merchants now-a-days, I suppose nothing will satisfy him but having a manor of his own; they say he'll soon be made an alderman; and if once he's that, Master Hewet won't be long before he's Lord Mayor, depend on't."

On trudged the four inseparables, and on ran their tongues, touching upon everybody's business but their own, and their ramble ended as usual in the Cardinal's Hat, where a glorious supper was, upon this auspicious occasion, to be given by mine host, Brassinjaw, to a select circle of his worshipful customers, including, of course, these, his four most worthy neighbours.

It has often been said that a cunning knave will frequently throw a sprat to catch a herring, but if the rich delicacies, thrown by Brassinjaw before his invited friends, were to be considered as his sprat, what he expected to catch thereby must have been at least a whale.

The lower room of the tavern had been fancifully decorated; but all the decorations were complimentary to the new king, and, as in most cases, where a man makes a change in his habits, religion, or even dress, he flies from one extreme to the other—so did mine host of the Cardinal's Hat. No one, to have seen him on this day, could ever have believed they were looking at the saintly Father Brassinjaw; instead of his shaven head, his crown was now covered by a perfect forest of hair; his beard might be likened to the brushwood beneath. A silken hood, or as he called it, his "liripoop," hung behind; a broad collar of fine linen, scalloped round the edges, was about his neck, and came down one third way over his breast; his pouch, of black velvet, had been made, according to his orders, both large and deep; but his pouch was not the only deep part about Master Brassinjaw. At his left side he wore a double sheath of

daggers; his stocks were gartered beneath his knees, but would, when pulled up, reach a good way above them.

Right heartily did he receive his "dearly beloved friends," as he called his guests, indeed, so heartily, that one would have believed the twenty or thirty who now congregated, had been about to pay for what they should devour; and, perhaps, in the end they did.

Motley was the group now thronging in; here was the carpenter, with his hammer and adze stuck in his girdle; the dyer, with his hands tinted with a mixture of every colour under the sun; then came the webber, or weaver, arm-in-arm with the tapiser, or maker of tapestry; but the most numerous were the haberdashers; but haberdashers in those days, were not craftsmen confined in their dealings to a few ribbons, or laces, or the like, as in our time, but dealt in almost all things fitted to the wear of man, woman, and child; they had originally been a part and parcel of the mercers, but had long since divided themselves into two branches; and, as in all cases of companies formerly, they were dedicated to some Saint; the one were the boys of St. Catherine, the other of St. Nicholas. Hatters, or hurriers, belonged to the haberdashers; and so did the milliners; they were called *milliners*, because they dealt, not in ladies' caps, as in our days, but in articles brought from Milan, such as brooches, aiglets, spurs, glasses, &c. A few military men were there too, who swore oaths as long as their own swords, and came with appetites quite as keen: but the oddest party of all were about half-a-dozen non-descript looking personager; these had formerly been Grey Friars, but now had nothing grey about them, but their heads and beards; their dresses were formed of all kinds of material, colour and style; these had once been old cronies of Brassinjaw's in happier times, and now were welcomed here, as he asserted, out of "sheer charity;" but the truth was, they were comical fellows, and brought to that house many a spendthrift customer, to hear their droll tales, and roystering ditties.

As we before hinted, Brassinjaw had gone from one extreme to the other, and could he have found anything further on, to have rested his foot upon, he would certainly have stepped beyond it; his maxim was, "Move with the times, my masters, move with the times, or you may chance to get trampled to death by the crowds that are hurrying onwards;" and sure enough, at last his preaching and his practice did not belie each other, for instead of merely moving *with* the times, he appeared to wish to outstrip, and run before them.

The banquet which he had prepared was rich in the extreme, for it contained many delicacies which were seldom seen but upon the table of the lordly great. Some few of the articles might not be thought very delicate in our days, but were actually esteemed as such by our forefathers.

The signal being given, the guests hurried to their seats, and then the clatter began. The helpers tumbled over each other, in their anxiety to cover the board with the celerity of magic, and many a good flagon of ale, and pottle of wine, found its way down the back of a guest, instead of his throat.

The great beauty of a feast in those days, was its magnitude, or rather the magnitude of its component parts. The three first dishes placed

upon the board, were, an enormous calf's head, crowned with jelly ; at the one side was placed a stewed porpoise, cooked whole ; at the other a delicately roasted swan, covered with a veil of white sauce ; these Brassinjaw facetiously nicknamed the Pope, the Cardinal, and the Lady Abbess. Two great platters of preserved larks, he called his singing boys ; the dish of powdered horse, that is, horse-flesh powdered with salt (as we should say, salted), he named his steed of honour.

"But uprise, my gentles ! uprise, my simples ! uprise •ye all !" he exclaimed, in a voice of exultation, and command, as the door again opened to admit more helpers bearing more viands ; "up, Lords and Commons, Priests and Laymen, up, I say, for here approaches our noble lord, the King, our heart's beloved, Edward the Sixth !"

The dish he had honoured by naming it "Edward the Sixth," was borne by two serviteurs, and contained a peacock in full plumage, with tail outspread ; great cheering greeted this magnificent display of Brassinjaw's liberality, for a peacock served up in its feathers, was a dish but seldom seen, excepting at the banquets of the nobility, and was generally styled "the food of lovers, and the meat of lords ;" it was stuffed with spices and sweet herbs. When roasted to a beautiful brown, the skin and feathers were again put on, the beak and comb gilt, and the tail, as we have said, outspread.

Just as Brassinjaw had exclaimed, "*De gustibus non est disputandum*," as the learned clerk said to the millmaid, who preferred kissing a cow to himself ; so take which you will, my masters, there is here withal somewhat to suit all tastes"—yes, just as he had finished this strange sort of grace ; a heavy clattering was heard upon the stairs, leading down to the lower room in which they were ; the sound would not have been an inappropriate introduction for the ghost in Don Giovanni ; nor, indeed, would the figure which soon presented itself at the door, which flew open with a bang, have been a bad substitute for that spiritual personage.

The guests starting at the noise, looked round, and there they beheld a knight in full armour ; he was followed, not by his esquire, but by a sort of monster, covered all over with scales. The new comers were the valiant St. George and the awful Dragon of the pageant.

After standing for a few minutes, to the great admiration of the beholders, the knight taking off his helmet, and the Dragon his head, displayed the well-known visages of Diddle 'em Downy and Ugly Tom.

A thunder of applause greeted their appearance, but poor Downy was really downy, for he had received such a deadly blow to all his hopes, by the King passing on without vouchsafing a hearing to the splendid speech he had been for weeks concocting, that he entered with a face that had evidently been well washed by tears. But as every one began to laugh, he soon began to laugh too ; so being drawn out of his iron sheath, he, like a well-tempered blade, not only showed his point, but how sharp and cutting he could be, if required. His disappointment being a hard morsel to swallow, Brassinjaw made him wash it down with copious draughts of Romney sack, which taking proper effect upon his spirits, he very shortly came out as brilliantly as ever.

Boisterous and jolly was the party; the viands, and their dressings were declared "wonderful," but nothing caused so much wonder to each of the guests, as to think where his neighbour could possibly have procured such an appetite! The pope was no more to be seen; the cardinal was fast following the pope; and the swan, the white-veiled lady abbess, had been so much admired by the gallants around, that they actually ate her up—not a lip there, but had tasted of her sweetness. The powdered horse ran off at good speed under a saddle of mutton, which was the dish above it. It was quite a lark to the company, to see the singing boys fly down every throat; and poor King Edward, the noble peacock, soon left nothing but his HEAD to tell his TAIL (tale). This pun has been used several times since, but we believe it was *really* new about three hundred years ago.

Great were beginning to be the discussions about the various pageants of the day, but this being rather a sore subject with Diddle 'em, Brassinjaw, to save his friend from the painful dilemma into which such conversation would lead him, proposed a song.

The moment the song was intimated, every eye turned upon Diddle 'em Downy; but, for once, poor Downy did not respond by his usual wink of assent; no, Diddle 'em was a disappointed man—he had been building up an enormous tower of hopes upon the effect his speech was to have made upon the young king; his was not to have been a speech of laudation, mixed up with good advice, as most were; for he knew full well that good advice is generally rather a bitter pill for kings to swallow, and always seems to increase in bitterness according to its goodness; no, his was to have been one of such a comic nature, that he expected the king's grooms would have been obliged to hold their lord's legs, to keep him from falling off his horse, with laughing. The speech was to have been the stepping stone to Downy becoming the king's jester; but his tower of hopes had fallen about his ears, and had completely crushed his heart; so, he merely looked sadly round, and heaved a sigh—this caused an enormous laugh; for every thing Downy did was thought to be funny. Brassinjaw, who, from his former calling had been trained to study the strength or weakness of the human heart, saw at once that Diddle 'em was not acting; so, to relieve the disappointed droll, he roared out "No, no, my gallants; no Diddle 'em yet; for who can sing *after* Diddle 'em? but even I, Master Brassinjaw, the jolly vintner of the Bridge, don't mind *before*; so to set the concert going, list ye roysterers all to me."

Saying this, he cleared his throat with a good pint of sack, and, falling into the humour of the times, sang the following loyal ditty—

I.

I'll sing you a song,
That shall not be too long;
But one that each true English heart should e'er sing;
'Tis born, sure, for fame,
Would you ask me its name?
'Tis—Down with the pope, boys, and up with the king!
Then join me in chorus, and loyally sing,
Down, down with the pope, boys, and up with the king!

II.

Now, as poor "Peter-pence"^{*}
 We have driven from hence,
 Some pence to our own shaves may fall, let us hope ;
 And won't its sweet chinking,
 In my pouch, I'm thinking,
 Sound better by fag, than in that of the pope ?
 Then join me in chorus, and loyally sing,
 Down, down with the pope, boys, and up with the king !

III.

If you'd have no more flames,
 Frighting men, maids, and dames,
 No stakes—but of beef—no, nor axe, racks, nor rope ;
 Why, take my advice,
 Nor stay to think twice,
 But up with the king, boys, and down with the pope !
 Then join me in chorus, and loyally sing,
 Down, down with the pope, boys, and up with the king !

As the singer was the giver of the feast, it was not very astonishing that this loyal ditty met with applause prodigious ! Hands clapped a storm of approbation that was truly deafening. Over and over again did the company roar out the two concluding lines. Just as they were repeating, for the twentieth time, the words "Down, down—" sure enough, down fell Diddle 'em backwards. His fright—for he thought Old Nick had upset him—made him cry out lustily, which, added to the clatter of his armour, that he knocked down in his fall, caused such an uproar, that every one started to his feet. Their surprise was in no small degree heightened, by seeing a man's head, as it were, protruding through the floor. The fact was, that Downy's seat being placed upon part of the trap-door, which led to the sterling below, by this being upraised from beneath, he was, consequently, thrown over, and it was the head of the man who had lifted the trap which they now looked upon. The man, seeming to know the place well, at once mounted, and, looking around, as if in search of some one he expected to see there, enquired whether "the host were there, or gone to the devil ?"

"Marry, the host is here !" said Catchemayde, "and a right worshipful host he is—that is if you want the present one ; but as you seem to be a stranger, mayhap 'tis he who was hanged some eight years ago, and if so, we have not yet received any news as to his present whereabouts."

Brassinjaw stood looking intently upon the stranger, but said not a word. At last, the company pointing him out, the man, after surveying him from head to foot, exclaimed—"That mine host ? no, no ! 'tis not he I sought ; I know him not !" then looking closer, he continued, "and yet, there is a twinkle, and a roguery in that eye which seems familiar to me."

* "Peter-pence." A tax, for a long course of years paid by the English to the Pope of Rome.

"Although you know not me," replied Brassinjaw, "I know you full well, notwithstanding that years have passed away, and you now come back, accoutred in the gear of a foreign soldier—a mercenary, as I should guess, from your patchwork style of arms—I know you, and you will, ere long, know me. But let us not stop the hilarity of this right festive eve by prosy explanations—for one night you are a welcome comer: what may after happen, will be the child of chance. Spikeley, be merry, as the guest of your once sworn friend, the saintly Father Brassinjaw."

CHAPTER XXI.

*So discreet and fair of eloquence
So benign, and so digne of reverence,
And could so the people's heart embrace,
That each her loveth that looketh on her face.*

CHAUCER.

WHEN the merchant and his party had well cleared Temple Bar, and got, as it were into the open country—for as yet, although there were many houses built on different portions of the Strand, they were so straggling and far apart, that the road could scarcely yet be called a street—the three females, lifting their thick veils, disclosed the fair faces of Alyce, Anne, and Flora.

Anne had now reached that sweetest of all epochs in a female life—the bud of womanhood, when every leaf is opened by the flattering breath of Hope, when Truth's bright wings seem fluttering o'er all around. Deceit is only known by name, as some fell ogre in a wild romance—a thing to dread in fancy, but never really to be found on earth. How strangely do a few short years reverse the picture! Deceit is found at every turn—Truth's fluttering wings are now outstretched to bear its soul so far away, that scarcely is it ever really seen again—or if it be, 'tis so disguised we pass it by unheedingly; Hope, which was first in youth, is last in age; it now can be discerned but through refracted rays, that to our deluded vision seem to place it upon the earth, while its real home can alone be found in heaven.

Anne had not outgrown the promise her infant beauty had made, of what perfection should be her own in womanhood: the same sweet lovely face, that had caused her to be called the Infant Venus of the show, was there—the same luxuriant tresses, in graceful ringlets, fell over and partially hid from view her sweetly-moulded shoulders, and descending, reached nearly to the waist. Checklocke's admiration of her waist, and of her tiny foot, was but the echo of that praise which all bestowed who saw them.

It is often said, that one of the greatest beauties of a beautiful girl, lies in her not knowing that she is beautiful; this is absurd—every beauty knows herself to be such; but every one of sense keeps that knowledge from obtruding itself on others, and thus gains double admi-

ration ; for in this instance, as in that of charity, we are more inclined to bestow where we are not asked to give.

Anne knew full well that she was lovely ; but those upon whom she daily looked were nearly as fair as she, so that the idea of being different to others never crossed her mind. She had felt the bitterness of her early life so acutely, that now the happiness she possessed was all in all to her ; admiration could have added but little to her present comfort ; and, indeed, the secluded life she had been for some years passing, prevented her obtaining the knowledge of any pleasure derivable from such a source. Her father, Edward, and the Bridge shooter, were the only males she ever conversed with, and those were not likely to apply the match of flattery to that train of vanity, which, if once lighted, so often ends in the destruction of those who allow so deadly an enemy of woman to approach the citadel of the mind. The only one of the three who could have been at all expected to gaze upon Anne with an eye of admiration, such as to lead the tongue to proclaim its adulation, was Edward Osborne. Now, it so happened, that these two had grown up together in that peculiar intimacy of brotherly and sisterly love, which seldom ends in a warmer feeling ; so that it never entered either of their minds to think of what relationship they really stood in to each other.

As they rode along, the hand of the merchant was scarcely for a moment from his pouch, unless while bestowing some trifling alms upon the beggars who thronged the whole line of road, from the City of London to that of Westminster ; nor was it long before it was again returned to that pouch, but merely for another alms.

As we have said before, the dissolution of the monasteries had caused the whole country to be overrun with vagabonds and beggars ; but, what was worse, a great portion of these vagabonds were also thieves, who took whatever they could get by asking, or if not easily obtained that way, they helped themselves to what they liked without leave given.

This state of things had been gradually increasing for some years, and had now attained such a fearful height, that shortly after the accession of Edward VI. one of the most extraordinary laws was created, which for severity is unexampled, and will astonish many of our readers to peruse—yes, a law was passed which ordered “ that any person found living *‘ idly or loiteringly ’* for the space of three days, should on being brought before a justice, be marked as a vagabond, *with a hot iron on the breast*, and adjudged to be *the slave for two years* of the person informing against him, who, it is added, ‘ shall take the same slave, and give him bread, water, or small drink, and *refuse meat*, and cause him to work, by *beating, chaining, or otherwise*, in such work and labour as he shall put him to, be it never so vile.’ If in the course of this term the slave absent himself for fourteen days, he was to be marked with *a hot iron on the forehead, or the ball of the cheek*, and adjudged to be *a slave to his master for ever !* If he ran away a second time, he was to suffer death as a felon. Masters were empowered to sell, bequeath, let out for hire, or give the service of their slaves to any person whomsoever, upon conditions, and for such term of years as the said persons be adjudged

to them for slaves, after the like sort and manner as they may do of any other moveable goods or chattels."

A master was likewise authorized to put a ring of iron about the neck, arm, or leg of his slave, for a more certain knowledge and surety of keeping him. Finally, "all persons that chose were authorized to *seize the children of beggars*, and to retain them as apprentices, the boys till they were twenty-four, the girls till they were twenty years of age; and if they ran away before the end of their term, the master was permitted, upon recovering them, to punish them in chains, or otherwise, and to use them as slaves till the time of their apprenticeship should have expired."

As the historian justly observes, fearful as such a diabolical act appears, it is yet interesting, as giving a clear proof of the enormous evil of vagrancy at that time, and how almost impossible it was to check the growth of that evil, if to do so it required such a dreadful act as the one we have quoted.

When our party had reached Charing Cross, they halted for a moment, for such crowds of persons filled up the road down to Holbien's beautiful gate of Whitehall, which then stood across the road near where the Horse-Guards now is, that the merchant altered his first intention of crossing the river at the Horseferry for Westminster and Lambeth, so turned up Hedge-Lane, a pretty lane, with hedges on each side, afterwards known as Witcomb Street, now a dirty and inconvenient, but much used thoroughfare for omnibuses, just beyond the National Gallery. This lane was chosen in preference to the next turning, called, even then, the "Haymarket," as being more retired. At the top of this lane they turned to the left into what is now Coventry Street and Piccadilly, but then an open country road, called the "Waye to Redinge;" this road passed straight on beyond the corner at Hyde Park, to the Knight's Bridge. Passing this bridge, they entered Bell Lane, well known in these days as Brompton Row: here once was a large bell, near the turning in the road, belonging, doubtless, to some religious house hard by, and placed there, in all probability, for the double purpose of religion, and to warn travellers of their locality in times of darkness or of fogs. This bell, in part, appears to have given the name to a sign on a public house now standing upon the spot, called "the Bell and Horns."

Our travellers soon found themselves on the common of Chelsea, which led to the top of Church Street, still so called, and where, until a few years ago, when it was burnt to the ground, stood an ostlery, at which Henry the Eighth's horses were changed when he travelled that road. Near Church Street was the ferry: here Edward pointed out to Anne the spot on the other side where he had taken his first lesson in swimming from his now old friend, the Bridge-shooter, and had thus laid the foundation of his knowledge of that art, which so soon enabled him to save the life of young Talbot.

"Yes," said Anne, kindly pressing his hand, "and of another whom you seem to have forgotten—where should I have been now, Edward, but for that knowledge?"

They now passed the ferry, and as the evening began to close in, put spurs to their horses, and, at a good round pace, but to the slight alarm

of Flora, who laughed very loud indeed, to hide, as well as she could, her fear, they made no stop until they reached the heath.

The three cavaliers soon lifted their fair charges to the ground, and now, the signal being given, the door was opened; but such strict orders had been issued never to open those doors until it was beyond all doubt as to whom they were opening, that, the apparent inhospitable delay rather pleased the merchant than otherwise, proving, as it did, that those in care of his rural abode attended well to what he said.

The sharp evening breeze had given such a glow to the cheeks of the three fair ones, that the merchant could not help shewing his admiration of their beauty by a sly look at Edward and the Bridge-shooter, as much as to say "Did you ever see three such pretty creatures."

He was once more comfortably at home, for the merchant never now called it being "at home" whilst on the Bridge, and, indeed, for some weeks past, he had been literally abroad, and would, almost immediately, be compelled again to absent himself from the heath and all he loved. How long he might be away he scarcely knew.

After having exhausted all the topics which the wonderful sights they had that day seen gave rise to, the conversation, they knew not how, gradually took a more sombre tone, and was settling into that exciting, but absurd strain, of telling ghost stories. The merchant invented two or three, which, being brought up to a climax that made Flora creep almost into the very arms of William for shelter, he would suddenly give such a ridiculous turn to them, that every one present felt quite ashamed at having been nervous at such nonsense.

"Well," said William, "I don't know, but although I am not very superstitious, I can't help thinking that—and, by the by, mother, who grows younger every day, instead of growing older, which is rather odd, if she is not a witch, declares, that for several nights past, she has seen the ghost of —"

He suddenly checked himself as his eyes met those of Alyce, who seemed to be devouring his words.

"Of whom?" enquired the merchant, smiling, "speak out, speak out! we are not afraid of hearing whose ghost your mother fancies she has seen—it's too absurd to look so serious about. Was it mine? or Edward's? or Anne's?—perhaps Flora's? But if you are afraid of frightening our dame and maidens here, whisper the dreadful name into my ear, and let me have a hearty laugh; for laugh I shall, depend on't."

"Oh do," said Alyce, "tell your master; for then I, his wife, shall be sure to know it by and by."

"That thou shalt, sweet one," replied the merchant, taking her hand in his own.

"I doubt it," replied the Bridge-shooter; "but since you command me, know then that she says for nights past she has seen the same vision—the same ghost of —"

Here he whispered into the merchant's ear. Hewet's countenance in an instant became deathly pale.

"Oh heavens!" exclaimed Alyce, starting to her husband. "Gracious powers! what ails you? William, William! what has he said? tell me, tell me!"

"Not for worlds, dear," replied the merchant, who, quickly rousing his energy, endeavoured to laugh, and after a time so far rallied, that, assuming an unconcerned air, he enquired jokingly, "and what might the terrible ghost say, pray?"

"Nothing!" replied the Bridge-shooter, rather annoyed at the merchant's seeming want of belief.

"Nothing!" echoed the merchant; "well, then, as the conjurers say, 'where there's nothing in, why, nothing can come out.' I think we may safely predict that nothing will come out of this."

"No!" said the Bridge-shooter, "the ghost said nothing; but mother says a good deal, as she generally does upon most occasions; but 'mark me,' says she, 'if before the moon shall wane, you hear not something that shall surprise you all, believe not in my power over the spirits of another world—murder never lies still in its bed of blood.'"

"Oh, mercy, William!" exclaimed Flora, "don't, don't talk so!"

"But I must," interrupted the Bridge-shooter, "I must say what I was told to say. Yes, those were her words—'murder never lies still in its bed of blood, nor does the murdered victim in his gory winding-sheet. Danger threatens some one who was dear to him who's dead—he comes to warn them.'"

"Whom means she by them?" enquired Alyce, anxiously.

"She pretends not to know as yet; but what is strange, she says, is that, whenever the vision is about to appear, her ears are filled by the sweetest sounds of music floating in the air."

"Hush!" exclaimed Alyce, almost in a whisper, her eyes starting with fear; "hush! 'tis there again."

Every face now evinced anxiety, for in the night-breeze could distinctly be heard a sweet and melancholy air, in flute-like tones.

"This is not the first night we have heard that sound," said Flora softly to William; "hark! 'tis fainter now—and now—'tis gone."

After the last sad note had died away, the whole party sat for several seconds perfectly still, as if fearful of breaking some dreadful spell, but what spell they knew not. At last, the merchant, who was anxious to relieve the fears of his dear Alyce, and, indeed, of his child, and Flora too, endeavoured to persuade them that it was merely the sighing of the wind through the boughs of the trees, aided by their own heated imaginations.

"But, father, dear father," said Anne, "we have heard it before for several nights, and 'tis not likely the boughs of trees would sigh the self same air again and again. I could sing it, were I not afraid."

"And so could I!" exclaimed Flora.

"Desist, desist, foolish girls!" said the merchant, sharply; "we have talked upon these follies too long already: so to rest, to rest, all of ye!"

Flora, taking the lamps, attended Alyce and her daughter to their rooms.

When they were gone—"Now, William," said the merchant, "our good dame being away, speak out; but it was a foolish subject to touch upon, while she was present."

"I know it was, master," said the Bridge-shooter; "but when once I had got into the mire, I did not know how to get out again. It's very odd, though, is it not, master, that the old woman should always be dreaming—for it must be a dream—that she sees the murdered knight,

Sir Filbut ? and she says he's covered all over with diamonds, and keeps pointing to one upon his breast."

"What annoys me most, in this night's silly affair," said Master Hewet, or Master Allen, as he was called upon the heath, "is, that I fear it will raise an impediment to our leaving the women here alone: 'tis true there are plenty of servants and people at the farm, to protect them from real danger——But, no no ! I will not create difficulties ; perhaps, by the morning, all will have been forgotten ; so farewell."

When Edward had entered his room, he found it filled with smoke from the wood fire ; he threw open the window to breathe more freely, and gazed for some time upon the moonlight scene without. He fancied at one moment that he saw a figure half hidden behind a tree, as of some one watching the dwelling, but as the figure gave no signs of motion, he believed himself mistaken ; and as the smoke had now disappeared, he lighted his lamp, which hung by a long line from the ceiling, and the room being still warm and close, he left the window open, and seating himself near the table, for a time was completely lost in a reverie.

At last, having shaken this sad feeling off, but not feeling inclined for sleep, he drew forth from his travelling bag a thick strongly-bound book ; it was mounted in brass, and had an antique lock.—"When I began to write in this book," he said, "I thought it would be an endless source of pleasure to me, in after-years, to look back upon what I did, and thought, and hoped, from day to day ; but I have lived long enough to find, that a diary is, to the writer, one of the saddest of sad books to read. Ah !" he said, as he read from one of the early pages, "I was a boy when I wrote that—it was the day of my apprenticeship. What a little thing Anne was then ! I was her playmate in those days ; and, oh, what happy romps we used to have together ! I am now a man, and she almost a woman. Sometimes, when I look at her, I doubt that she can be herself, and that I gaze upon her who used to love to climb upon my shoulder, and would kiss me until I carried her around the place, and then would kiss me again, as she said, in payment for her ride. Heigho ! heigho ! I wish we could have always remained as we then were ! But no, I then sighed to be a man ; and now I am a man. I sigh to be a boy ! I wonder if there be, in this whole world, one human being who is content ? ' May 1536—On this day it was I saved Anne's life.' The record of that day alone shall prevent me ever destroying this book ! Ah ! and there is the night of the marsh ! Oh ! I shudder at the remembrance of that horrid night !—I'll read no line of that," and he turned over many pages. "On this day Sir Filbut was murdered—how strange that no clue should ever have been discovered by which the murderers could be traced !"

The book suddenly fell from his hand, as he started up. He gazed around, really alarmed, for in his ear was murmuring the very air they had that night heard with so much dread. It was but a strain ; and all again was still. He shook himself, as though he had been dreaming, and that motion would wake him. "Oh," he said, "this is too weak ! I'll just set down the occurrences of to-day, and then to bed."

He picked up the book, and also a piece of paper, that had fallen out ; he looked at it—it was anything but likely to raise his spirits ; for it

was the summons, written in blood, which had caused him to seek the Witch of the Marsh. He replaced it, and then commenced writing.

Edward wrote a beautiful, though rather peculiar hand; the signature at the foot of the plate is a fac-simile of an autograph of Edward Osborne, now in the British Museum.

He had just come to that part of the events of the evening, when they had heard the mysterious music, when suddenly the lamp fell from the ceiling and was extinguished; the fire had dwindled to a few smouldering ashes; he was stooping in the endeavour to kindle a piece of paper by their heat, when he again started at hearing a repetition of the very same strain he had so recently heard before—it lasted but for a second. He stood erect, and said firmly, although in a low and measured tone—"If thou be a spirit, speak thy will! Wicked as I know I am, as a creature of God, I am still good enough, as a being of earth, not to fear thy words or sight! Speak! I am prepared to answer thee!"

Notwithstanding all his imagined firmness and determination, large drops would start from his brow: the silence now seemed unendurable, yet he feared to speak again, for he felt that he should start at his own voice. He hurried to his couch, and flinging himself, dressed as he was, beneath the coverlid, passed an anxious and almost sleepless night.

Edward Osborne remained for several hours in this state of mysterious apprehension, and it was not until dawn, that sleepless fear gave way to sleep's sweet self. As he descended to the early meal, he was debating with himself, how he should best reveal what he had heard in the dead hour of night, when—could his ears deceive him? or was he really bewitched? His hand was on the latch—he hesitated—for from the very room he was about to enter, he again heard the air which had so startled him in the night. He opened the door suddenly, and stood bewildered before the whole family, who had already assembled, and were now in high glee, and laughing heartily.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Anne, running to him, "what ails you? Why, Edward, you are ill!"

Osborne observing that all the rest of the party had smiles on their faces, felt the colour rise into his cheeks, from shame at his own fears.

"We were afraid," continued Anne, "that you had heard the ghost in the night, as Flora did."

"Has Flora heard it too?" enquired Edward, quickly.

"Oh, yes!" replied the laughing girl, "and we've found him. Yes, we have, we have found the ghost."

"Ghost indeed!" said Flora; "no, Master Edward, but we have discovered the cause for our alarm: last night I was turning and tossing in my bed, thinking of William, and all sorts of other horrid things, when I was made almost to jump out of my skin, by hearing the air again: it came from Mistress Anne's room. I took my lamp, for I had been afraid to put it out, and plucking up all my courage, I entered, determined that if a ghost had come to run away with her, he should run away with me too; and there I found—now what do you think I found?—why, my sweet young mistress fast asleep, singing the very tune: she has got it quite pat, and was just now humming it to us."

Osborne again quite blushed, for he remembered that a mere partition



Legend osborn

divided his own room from that of Mistress Anne's. "But you said just now, you had found the ghost," observed Edward, still clinging to the mysterious.

"No, *we* have not," replied Flora, "but Bridget, the dairymaid, has. She was not so foolish as *we*, for when she heard the music first, she thought it was some wandering minstrel passing along, so going to the gate, there she found a very nice young man, playing upon a flute, she gave him a silver penny. 'Thank you, my pretty maid,' said he, 'and since you are so generous, I will give you something in return : ' he placed a piece of money in her hand, which, upon coming into the house she discovered was gold. The same minstrel passes here every night, but since that time at a greater distance from the cottage."

"Come, come to breakfast," said the merchant, "and let us make a ghost of that ; the horses will be here anon, and it's but sorry travelling this time of year, unless one has a good lining to one's jerkin."

"Then you must go, William?" said Alyce kindly.

"Ay, sweetheart, and, alack ! I know not for how many days, nay, perhaps weeks ; but Edward and his squire there shall come down on Saturdays as usual, and Flora——"

"Lawks, master !" said Flora, "I had forgot that I, too, am to go away to-day ; my old aunt at Hampton is ill ; I have a great mind not to go."

"Indeed, but you must Flora—I insist," said Alyce. "It may perhaps be the last time you may ever see your aunt in this world ; go, by all means ; Anne and I shall do right well, believe me ; for she, bless her, is ever so kind, so cheerful, that I am never lonely if I only feel that she is within my call."

A short time more, and the horses were at the door. Flora bustled about, and was soon warmly wrapped up, indeed, warmer than she liked ; but the Bridge-shooter insisting upon wrapping all sorts of things round her, she was fain to consent, for she seldom had the heart to refuse him anything. She and William were quickly mounted, in the same manner they had arrived, and bidding the rest adieu, rode towards Hampton.

Alyce and her daughter put on their walking gear, and with the merchant and Edward, who led their horses, strolled for a mile along the road towards London.

"Promise me," said Osborne, addressing his young mistress, with whom he was walking, "promise me, Anne, that you will write every day the carrier comes to London, for, although Flora was no great protector, nor is there here much danger, yet, her being away seems to—to—I don't know what I fear, yet I should like to know all that is passing at the cottage, so that I may forward the account to your good father ; do you promise ?"

"Why should I not ?" replied Anne ; "a letter is no such mighty task, thanks to your early care of my writing, and the good tuition of my kind instructresses." This point being settled, and the time for parting having arrived, the merchant and Edward mounted, and riding off at a brisk trot, were soon lost to sight.

They had not gone far, before they met with two of the most ill-looking ruffians that eyes ever beheld ; the one was an old man, the other about

thirty, but both were athletic, and had a dash of the military swagger about them, although their attire did not bespeak them of that class. So infested had every road now become with mendicants of every description, that they would have been passed by unnoticed, had not the elder one placed himself before the horses, and taking off his cap, as did the other, began to beg.—“Hast no charity, master?” said the man.

“Ay, marry,” replied the merchant, “plenty for those who deserve it.”

“And what for those who do not?” enquired the other, saucily.

“Hard knocks,” said the merchant, “or, perhaps, a piece of lead in lieu of gold.”

“I have had enough of lead,” said the elder ruffian, “and of hard knocks too, and could tell you a little about taking what doesn’t belong to one, for I was with Tom Cromwell at the sacking of Rome; but now would fain lay hands upon nought but what’s freely given—so, charity, master, charity.”

“That you may not have an excuse for doing worse—there, take that!” and as he said this he threw a piece of money upon the ground; it fell at the side of his horse; the old man stooped to pick it up, as the young one said, “Have you nothing more? This won’t do!” He seized the merchant’s rein, but almost at the same moment let it loose again, for a terrific blow from the but-end of Hewet’s riding-whip nearly broke his wrist. The merchant and Edward waited not an instant; but, putting spurs to their horses, galloped off.

“Curses on you for a fool!” exclaimed the old man; “that’s what one gets by having to do with boys—couldn’t you see what I was about? In another moment I had lifted him off by the heel, head foremost: wherdown, one blow with your staff would have settled him, and the other fellow would have flown for his life: he was worth the plucking. I know him well, although he has forgotten me.”

The younger one said nothing to his mate; but, rubbing his wrist, kept on muttering the most horrible oaths the tongue of man could utter. They turned down a lane, and were soon hid from view.

“Never was there such a lovely morn as this, dear mother—was there?” said Anne, throwing open her warm mantle; “it is more like spring than winter, the sun is so glowing. Oh, how I should have delighted in such a day as this when I was a child, to have run about these fields, and played and romped with Edward! That’s the worst of growing old; one must not be really happy, and play the child.”

“Most girls at your age, dearest,” replied her mother, “too often want to play the woman; they little know what cares and dangers are attached to that envied title. Be a child, dear Anne, as long as thou canst; for I would have thee happy. And when thou art a woman——”

“But why, dear mother, cannot women be happy, as well as children? I could live with you, and have Flora, and Edward, and ——” she stopped suddenly. “Did you hear that? she said, ‘How alarmed we should have been, but for good Bridget’s tale—listen! It is the very air: it comes from yonder copse. Let us steal softly thither; and who knows but we may see the cause of all our fears!’”

Before Alyce could make reply, Anne had nearly reached the thicket: her mother followed, rather to bring her back, than sanction her curiosity

—the sounds of the flute had ceased, and through a slight opening between the boughs they saw a young man sitting upon the stones of a small ruined chapel: he was plainly attired, but appeared, to judge by the slight view they obtained, to be particularly handsome—perhaps more so to his general bearing than mere beauty of features. His flute was now slung at his back; a gun lay by his side; and he was busily engaged sketching the remains of a beautiful cross that stood at some little distance.

Alyce led her daughter gently away without speaking, fearful that her voice might attract his notice; and she saw in what an unworthy light they should appear, were he to observe them at that moment.

"But only to think, now," said Anne, "that that very young man should have been the cause of giving us so much alarm; and now I have seen him, I am sure there is nothing alarming about him. I wish he had seen us, for I should have liked to have looked at the sketch he was making. I wonder if he would have gratified us if we had asked him?"

"Dear Anne, you are indeed now talking like a child," said Alyce; "surely you are not serious. Think you that it would have become us to have spoken to a stranger, and he a young man, and——"

"And so handsome!—I know you were going to say that," replied Anne. "Well, dear mother, there would have been no harm if you had; you always tell me to speak the truth, and that is the truth—he is handsome."

"Let us hasten home, child," said her mother; "we have strolled too far away, and I am not certain that we are in the right road. Mount, dear, on yon rising ground, and look if you can discern where we really are."

Anne was in an instant on the brow of the little hill. She uttered a scream, and flying back to her mother, clung round her in fearful alarm.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Alyce; "speak! speak! why this terror?"

"There! there!" ejaculated Anne, as she, with averted look, pointed towards the hill.

Alyce bent her gaze in that direction, when she saw, just over the rising ground, the ruffianly heads of the two men who had so recently met the merchant and Edward.

"Charity, charity!" said the old villain, as he and his companion advanced towards them; "charity, fair ladies; if we receive not charity from angels, where shall we look for it, eh?"

"Yes, yes, good man," said Alyce, at the same time drawing a purse from her pouch; "you are—yes! you are, very welcome, and——"

"Do not hurry yourself, fair lady, we can wait, and if there be any difficulty, we will open the purse for you." He put out his hand as if to take it; Alyce involuntarily threw her own hand backwards, when the other thief snatched the purse in a moment from her grasp.

"Merciful powers!" she exclaimed, now fully aware of their intent, "you do not mean to rob us?"

"Rob you," said the old man, "rob you? Heaven forbid! I rob a lady—no, no; but charity, you know, is the surest ladder to lead to heaven, and he who *makes* you charitable, is deserving of some reward. You are rich, lady, and we are poor, and 'he who gives to the poor——'"

but I need not remind you of your duty. I'm thinking how much more good that gold chain around your neck would do to such poor devils as we are, than it ever can to the like of you."

"Oh, no, no, no! not that, not that!" exclaimed Alyce, in perfect agony. "It was the gift of one I love more than life."

"Oh, do not take that!" said Anne; "here is mine; take all I have, there, there, and there." She cast down everything she could tear from off herself.

As the thieves stooped to pick up the jewels and money that lay about—"Fly!" exclaimed Alyce, seizing hold of her daughter's hand; in another instant, and they had bounded over the little hill, and were for a time out of sight of the robbers, who, swearing, picked up the valuables as rapidly as they could, and then started in pursuit of the fugitives.

"They must be deers indeed," said the old ruffian, "to outrun such huntsmen as we. I'll have that chain, or I'll cut her throat in half with it." He then bawled out, at the top of his voice—"Stop, fools, or it will be the worse for you!"

The few moments start which Alyce and Anne had had, placed a good space between them and their pursuers, for the poor souls felt that they were flying for their lives, and such a feeling adds wings to the feet of all who experience its agony; every moment brought the wretches closer upon them, and every moment reduced their power to fly: despair had seized upon both their hearts, when they were overtaken, and seized by the iron grasp of the ruffians.

"Ye shall pay soundly for this, my mistresses—no more foolery!" and the old villain seized Anne round the waist, while the other caught hold of Alyce: they were just dragging them asunder—the air was filled with the screams of the helpless creatures—when suddenly one of the ruffians uttering a cry, fell heavily upon his face; at the same instant, the report of a gun sounded in their ears; the younger wretch, believing a rescue was at hand, bounded over a hedge, and disappeared in a deep ravine.

Alyce and her daughter had sunk upon their knees from fright, locked in each others arms, when they were almost maddened with joy, by hearing a voice assuring them that they were safe; then looking round, they saw, standing close to them, the same young man whom they had so lately observed sketching the cross near the ruined chapel. He assisted them to rise; when both Alyce and Anne, clinging to him, spoke their gratitude in a violent flood of tears.

"Courage! courage, ladies!" said the young man; "you are safe now; one villain has flown; and as to this monster," and he gave the body a push with his foot, "if ever he fly again, it will be with a warmer pair of wings than Heaven will ever send him for the purpose."

"Oh, sir!" said Alyce, endeavouring to compose her trembling nerves, "to whom do we owe this deep debt of gratitude?"

"You owe me nothing, ladies," he replied; "but I owe you one of the greatest happinesses of all my life—your having given me the opportunity to serve you. You ask me who I am—a poor artist, yes, a really poor artist; for, I fear me, my talent is as poor as is my purse—they call me Walter Lerue."



CHAPTER XXII.

It may well be, he lookèd on her face,
 In such a wise, as man that seeketh grace,
 But nothing wiste she of his intent.

CHAUCER.

As ALICE and her lovely daughter returned towards the cottage of the heath, their newly-made friend, for he had, they felt, been indeed a friend to them, made rapid progress in their good opinions; there was about his manner a gentle solicitude which is ever pleasing to the softer sex, and which now completely captivated both mother and child. That Anne should feel peculiarly delighted, was scarcely to be wondered at; when we reflect upon all the circumstances connected with their strange meeting. There was a romance, too, about the whole affair, and what sweet girl of Anne's age was ever dead to the powers of romance?

It seemed so strange that he, whom they had so lately been talking of, as connected with their late superstitious fears, should suddenly become, as it were, closely linked to them by the bonds of gratitude; and then, again, Walter Lerue being the first stranger who had approached the lovely girl for many years past, and possessing as he did in an eminent degree, those, almost resistless charms—youth, beauty, and apparent good nature—caused her to feel for the moment, that she had discovered some peculiar magic sensation of pleasure, for which she could not account.

Perhaps, all she felt was nothing more than unbounded delight at having so recently escaped a danger, at a moment when all hope seemed lost. Perhaps it might be the novelty of listening to the conversation of one, who spoke in strains so different to those she had as yet been accustomed to. It was the first time her ears had drank in the intoxicating breath of hidden flattery, and gallantry artfully disguised.

Walter Lerue, although young, was evidently a man who had seen much, and understood the world more deeply than his years would seem to warrant. But it was that very knowledge of the world, which now gave him the power of captivating the minds of his hearers, and taught him that a seeming timidity, is the most powerful weapon to use against the timid of the other sex—in fact it disarms them of their only safeguard—watchfulness.

There was one circumstance, which by most girls would have been regarded as highly flattering, but it caused Anne, more than once, to feel a degree of pain, scarcely to be accounted for; and that was, that whenever she turned towards their new acquaintance, she ever found his eyes rivetted upon her, as though they were endeavouring to allay their thirst of admiration at the fountains of her beauty.

Whether there was anything so very peculiar in the intensity of his gaze, we know not, but her inward heart seemed to say—"Why dost thou avert thine eyes? Edward has often gazed upon their light; but

then their shades were never lowered, as if by the hand of unacknowledged fear."

When they reached their home, Walter Lerue, unlike most young men in such circumstances, excused himself from intruding further upon them but expressed a hope that he might be allowed to return at a later hour, when they should have fully recovered from their recent alarm, and then, receive their commands regarding any further assistance they might deem his humble powers worthy of rendering. Just as he was turning away, after having received a thousand thanks, and more than one assurance of the pleasure his proposed return would afford them, he dropped the whole contents of his portfolio.

Observing the admiration Alyce evinced upon viewing one of the drawings, he hurriedly picked up the remainder, and said—"Although, I fear, the poor efforts of my pencil will but ill repay you for the time you must lose in looking at them, I will, with your permission, leave them all, until I again have the honour of waiting upon you."

Anne did not hesitate to own the delight she should feel by such a favour, and, although Alyce by gentle signs endeavoured to check her, she confessed, that they had seen him sketching the ruined cross, and that how much she had then wished to have asked to look upon his work.

Walter Lerue, smilingly replied—"That I felt so much delight whilst there at work, or that I should have succeeded so well—for I believe it to be my best effort—is no longer to me a wonder, since I now find an angel was smiling on my endeavours."

Alyce did not hear this remark, but Anne, looking Lerue full in the face, said—"It is upon the good works of the heart, and not of the hands, that angels smile."

Walter Lerue felt for a moment a little abashed, for he at once understood that fulsome flattery was not the battery that would ever subdue a mind like Anne's. He endeavoured not to shew that he felt her rebuke, and after one or two common-place sentences, made his bow and took the road down towards the town.

He walked rapidly—then he ran a little way—then, more than once, looked back, for his vanity had raised a hope that he might perchance find the Beauty of the Heath was looking after him; but in this he was sorely disappointed, but not so much so, that it should prevent his bounding along, as one often does, when the mind is particularly satisfied with some clever thought or hope that suddenly seems about to be fulfilled.

"Fate has indeed smiled on me to-day," he said; "to think now, that after watching and watching for days and weeks, and just upon being about to give up the pursuit, such a fall of good luck should be showered upon me. It's strange, that amidst all the beauties I have seen in every land of Europe, that I should never have gazed upon one so perfect as this simple girl, my Beauty of the Heath. But stop, stop, my master," he said, all at once checking himself, as if some weighty affair had suddenly struck upon his mind, "in pursuing love and pleasure, the goods of this world must not be forgotten—no, nor the ills neither—and, I fear me, if I be not cautious of my present ways, there may be more of ills than good come out on't. I'll hasten to the inn, and according to the news I

trust I shall there receive, shape my course. I wish I had never seen the girl. I think far more of her than prudence would, in my present position, sanction. I did not like that immoveable look she gave me, when I hinted she was an angel; how many, before now, have I called angels, and have been smiled on for my pains!"

When Walter Lerue reached the Ferry-house, which was also the ostlery of Putney, his first anxiety was to enquire whether the letter-carrier from London had yet arrived. Being answered in the affirmative, and that a communication for him was lying on the table in the room he occupied, he flew up the stairs, and seizing the epistle, tore it open; but he scarcely read a line, ere he dashed it upon the table in evident disappointment. "No money yet!" he exclaimed; "not a single noble!—no matter: they may starve, but they shall not conquer me. A pretty plight I'm in, though—here at an inn, already owing much, and with not a chance of paying what I owe. I am too proud to confess my position to the host; and too honest to run away in debt, though it were but for a time. Never did I wish to have the command of money more than at this juncture, and never was I so truly poor as now. Fool that I have been to loiter here so long, and all for the sake of looking at the pretty face of one, whom, now I know, seems far more distant from me, than when a perfect stranger. She's not one to be fooled by flattery—that's clear to me at the starting; and as to marriage, in such a position as mine, 'twere madness to dream of it. No, no, let me call up the little sense her bright eyes have left me. The host may retain what things I have here; they will be ample security for my debt, until I can pay him: let me hasten to London at once, and see myself what course to pursue; but never, no never, let me look upon the Beauty of the Heath again."

The more Walter Lerue determined upon, "never, no never, looking upon the Beauty of the Heath again," the slower did he feel the time wear away, which might render it not unbecoming in him, to pay his promised visit to the cottage; for, although he appeared in his own mind determined never to see his enchantress more, it never struck him that the best way of accomplishing such determination, was to avoid her presence. No, with him, as with those who are always going to do something *to-morrow*, a day, that, strange to say, never arrives, he intended *his* never to be after the next time, but *which* next time he meant, he had not thought of asking himself.

He had sat for some time, turning over in his mind the most likely acquaintances he might with safety apply to for assistance in his present circumstances, when a gentle tap was heard at the door of his room. "Come in," he said, but thinking it was one of the helpers, he did not observe who was standing at the door—it was a young girl, who, without being beautiful, possessed a countenance in which was found such a sweet expression of the purest innocence, that few could gaze upon her without an emotion, almost approaching to pity; she stood for a moment timidly, and then looking on Lerue, seemed upon the point of again retiring, when his eyes caught her moving dress, which causing him to turn, he said almost pettishly, as if to hide himself from reproach for

unkindness—"Lillia, you should have spoken; I knew not it was you." He rose, and taking her hand gently led her into the room.

"I used to speak, Walter," she said, "freely, a little while ago, but lately you have seemed so altered towards me, that I have feared I might offend; even now in saying Walter, I feel my face burn: you told me to call you so, soon after you first came here; and it sounds so much sweeter to my ears, than Master Lerue, that when I am alone, and thinking what I can do next to make you more comfortable and happy, I always say Walter: I say it a hundred times a day. It has just struck me, as my father is away from home, and will be so for some hours, that if you had nothing else to do, perhaps you would finish the likeness of me you have been taking such pains with. I have not sat to you for now more than a week; indeed, it is nine days, at this very hour."

"You seem to keep most correct accounts with time," said Lerue; "I had really forgotten the whole affair."

The poor girl's face suddenly became scarlet, which, Walter observing, endeavoured to soften the effect his seeming want of recollection had caused, by saying, "I mean, Lillia, as regards the day and hour; but, it is, indeed, a very long time since you have paid me a visit here."

"You have not asked me lately," replied the girl, rather reproachfully; "you used to be always making some excuse for being down with us, or that I might be here with you; perhaps it were better had I never been; but you were so kind then."

"And am I not so now, Lillia?" said Lerue, putting his arm around her; "I wish to be always kind to those I like."

"*Like! like!*" and she repeated the word with still stronger emphasis; "like is a colder word than that you used when first you held me thus; it then was—" and she again blushed—"love!"

"I know it was," was his reply; "but *liking* and *loving*, with some, mean exactly the same."

"No, no! with none can it mean the same!" exclaimed Lillia, quite empasioned: "a thousand human beings may each one *like* a thousand other human beings, but every single one that make up all those thousands, that one can *love* but one!"

Saying this, the poor girl buried her blushing face in Walter's bosom, for she had been betrayed into the expressions of feelings, that till now, she had never dreamed her heart possessed, nor that her tongue had power to tell.

Lerue, now, for the first time, really felt the wickedness of the part he had been playing, a part, alas, too often played by man in his vain unthinking years. How many are bad, not meaning to be so, until, step by step, they find themselves involved in a labyrinth of wrong, from which, their only chance of egress appears to be attainable by still going on.

Walter Lerue was one of those, the like of whom are to be found in thousands, not recklessly vicious, nor willingly dishonourable, but wanting in that most difficult of virtues, the power to withstand temptation. How many a man, ay, and woman too, who after sinning, has exclaimed, "Oh, had I known the guilt! had there but been some one kindly hand, to have pointed to the precipice o'er which I have fallen—one saving voice, to have warned me of the danger I was hurrying to, how

differently then would I have acted!" Oh! hypocrites—doubly hypocrites—for not only do you attempt to deceive those, who in pity listen to your ravings, but also to deceive yourselves!

No crime, no, nor venial fault, is ever perpetrated by man, but he has been forewarned, ay, and in time too, to halt upon his guilty-course, and with the power left, would he but exert it, of turning back into the road of right. Let any one of us ask our own hearts, did we ever do the most trifling wrong believing it to be a virtue, or believing that it was *not* a wrong even in the doing? No! but then comes in TEMPTATION, with his tinted glass, to give a colouring fictitious to all we longing gaze at; we know we are deceived; but then we have a saving clause, as we attempt to think it, by laying all blame upon TEMPTATION's back: his back, indeed, must be wide, wide as the universe, if it can carry off from us the load of half the guilt we heap upon it.

Walter Lerue, was at that very moment we are writing of, endeavouring to call TEMPTATION to account, for his own cruel conduct, to the really innocent, confiding Lillia.

Lerue had arrived at her father's ostlery, where he had taken up his abode, in order, as he said, to ramble about the neighbouring country for the purpose of sketching, he being an artist. To the fulfilment of his artistic duties, he added the meditative pleasures of fishing, and the more active and healthful recreation of the sportsman; he seldom went out without his fishing-tackle, or his magnificent gun, which latter, upon a recent occasion, he had used to some purpose, as the reader is already aware. Finding the master of the inn a far superior person to most of those who usually fill such stations, and, what to youth, perhaps, was still more attractive, that this superior host, had a very superior daughter, not far removed from childhood, either in years, or manner—for, as we have before hinted, she was simplicity and innocence personified, young Lerue experienced great pleasure in passing many an evening alone with the host and his child. Her perfect innocence was something so new to Walter, who had lived much amongst the most profligate of London, and the circumstance of finding such simplicity in an abode, so unlikely to foster that charming attribute of woman, that he was mightily taken with the youthful Lillia, and throwing off the rougher man, himself assumed the manners befitting childhood, and regarding the "Lilly of the Inn," for so he called her, more as a lovely plaything, than aught else, he sowed the seeds in her young heart, that were destined to bring forth the bitterest of all bitter fruit—unrequited affection.

Lerue, as we have before said, was now endeavouring to throw all blame upon the shoulders of TEMPTATION; he had, from the moment he beheld the beauty of the Heath, began to understand the extent of wrong he was doing the child of the inn, by awakening in her mind, feelings that must end in wretchedness, or perhaps in shame. He had gone so far in his thoughtlessness, that he knew not now how to undeceive her, without cruelly, most cruelly wounding a heart, that might have proved a treasure inestimable to another, but to him, all its purity and brightness were worthless. He had hoped by becoming more reserved, and by absenting himself more from her sight, to wean, as it were, her thoughts from one, upon whom he knew full well they were then so entirely fixed: having de-

bated much within himself upon this point, it seemed far less unkind to deceive her still, than openly to proclaim himself the unfeeling betrayer he really was. He soon renewed by kindness, or rather unkindness in disguise, the impression of neglect which his late behaviour had stamped upon her mind; and acting as nearly as he could the part he used but shortly since to play, so agreeably to himself, and so fatally to her, he, to a degree, succeeded; for, oh! how the youthful heart of woman does love to deceive itself, and frame all kinds of excuses for those they adore!

Walter Lerue, in order to change the thoughts of poor Lillia, bustled about amongst his drawings, looking for the unfinished sketch of the "Lilly of the Inn," and seemed to her willing eyes, the same kind Walter she had seen him first.

"Oh, I want it to be finished," she said, "so very much; for I long to tell my poor, dear, kind old father all, and to give him the picture of his child. Do you know, Walter, this is the first secret I have kept from him in all my life? and it makes me feel at times so very miserable; for I think, perhaps, he would not like to know the number of lous I have passed with you alone. Why did you wish me not to tell him about the picture?"

"In order that the pleasure might be the greater, when you gave it to him. But let us to work," said Walter, anxious to change the subject. "I almost forget where I put it. I thought it was in this portfolio," and he kept turning over his drawings carelessly.

"Or perhaps," said Lillia, "it may be in this: shall I look?"

"Do, child," he replied, "while I search this drawer. You know I have twenty sketches of you, somewhere."

"More than that," replied Lillia, "you were always making me sit before you, and then you used to look so kindly. Heavens!" she exclaimed, as her eye fell upon one of the drawings she was turning over, "how wonderfully like! and yet it cannot be."

"Cannot be what?" enquired Lerue, heedlessly.

"Not the likeness of my kind, kind schoolfellow, Anne; or, as I ought to call her now, Mistress Allen, the Beauty of the Heath."

Walter Lerue felt the blood fly to his face, yet scarcely knew why he should be thus confused; but his heart told him, that Anne was really the magnet which had attracted nearly every thought from the poor girl before him. It is true he had never loved Lillia, nor had he ever thought of doing so; but there was a flattering to his self-esteem, in gaining the power over her young affections, which was too sweet to his vanity for his better feelings to combat.

"And here is their cottage, too," she said; "and here is the lovely face of Anne, twenty times repeated, upon the same sheet of paper: you never told me, Walter, that you knew Dame Allen and her daughter."

"Nor did I," replied Lerue, "not until to-day; but I have often seen them, and these sketches are merely the offsprings of memory."

"I do not wonder that her sweet face should be remembered," said the girl; "would that I were as fair as she! then I might sink as deeply into the memory of those who look upon me—I mean not that; but into the heart's memory of one—only one——"

Lerue could not resist the kindly feeling which her look of intense affection called up in his heart: he pressed her to his bosom, and fondly kissed her forehead. He was sorry he had done so, now it was done, for he knew that such show of kindness on his part would but tighten the bonds that held her to him, and those bonds he wished, for her sake, as he deceived himself in thinking, to be for ever unloosed.

"Come, child," he said, "we will commence a new sketch of your pretty face, and not lose our time in looking for the one I have mislaid; and while I am at work, you shall tell me all you know about Dame—Dame Allen, I think you said the mother's name was?"

Lerue knew the name quite as well as Lillia, but he descended to this deceit, in order to appear perfectly indifferent as to those about whom they were then to make the subjects of their conversation. Poor Lillia for a moment felt that all was once more as it formerly had been, and joyously she smiled upon the young artist, as she took her seat.

"You had better," said Lerue, "look more that way; I have drawn your full face, until I am tired of it—I mean of drawing it—not of the face, for none could ever grow tired of that." The latter part of the sentence came forth but very coldly; there was no truthful feeling in his tone of voice, but Lillia felt grateful at hearing even such words, and was happy.

"I will look any way you like best," she said, turning her eyes from him; "but you used to say, an artist could never give the real expression, unless the object's eyes were fixed on him."

Lerue, not seeming to hear this observation, began to sketch, as he said—"And now, Lillia, tell me—what meant you by Anne—is that the name of Mistress Allen?—by Anne being your schoolfellow? Was she indeed so?"

"Oh, yes!" replied the Lilly of the Inn, "for many years; indeed for eight years; and oh, I used to love her so. You must know, that although poor father never talks about it, he was once in a very different station to that of keeping an ostlery—pray do not tell him I have said so—for he only let me know it a few days since, and wished me to keep the secret to myself; but, I know not why, I cannot keep a secret from you; and, indeed, the moment he told me, I felt so proud, that I determined to disobey him and disclose all to you; it seems, that do what I will, where you are concerned, I am led to do wrong; but this time, it is to do right, at least I think so."

"But about Mistress Anne," interrupted Leru; "has she lived here long?"

"Oh, yes, almost as long as I can remember things clearly. I was just turned eight, when she came up to the old convent house to be instructed; she was older than I was; but from some cause or other, she knew nothing, and used at times to say the strangest words—you can't think how strange some were; but she was so industrious, that ere long she far outstripped the foremost there: but it was not because she was so quick and clever, that we all loved her so much; but because she was so sensible, and more than that, so kind. I never saw any one so kind in her manner—but you."

"And do they live alone?" said Lerue.

"Mostly! that is all the week days; but on Saturdays, at eve, Master Allen, with two others, always comes, and remains until the Monday morning."

"Not always," replied Lerue, "for I have now been in this neighbourhood for some weeks, and have never yet seen man enter their abode, except the menials."

"That may have been, because, this being winter, they never come as they do in summer, by water, and land here at the ferry, but reach the heath by the road from London; and I believe for nearly all the time you have been here, the merchant, for so I know him to be, from Anne having told me so, has been far away; and even when he does come, he is but little seen in the town; nor do the people hereabouts know much, or indeed anything, of who, or what he is, further than that he gives a great deal to the poor, and all his household say he is the best of all good masters. How are you getting on, Walter?" enquired Lillia.

"Eh! oh—oh, pretty well!" replied Lerue, looking upon the paper, which was still untouched; "oh, pretty well; but I am not so quick to-day as usual;" and he began to scratch away with his pencil, faster than he had ever done in his life before.

After working, or seeming to work, for some little time, his mind appeared to be wandering far from the object of his labour. Lillia looking round, found him completely buried in thought; so much so, indeed, that he was quite unconscious that she had risen from where she had been sitting, and was now standing behind him, looking upon the paper, drawn on certainly, but without the slightest approach to any definite object. She placed her arm gently round his neck, which made him start as from a dream, as she said—"Walter, I will no longer keep from you all the inmost feelings of my poor simple heart—listen! I will now own in words, what you must have already guessed—yes, from a thousand, and a thousand little acts of mine; for a female heart cannot long keep the secret of its affection from him, who, she believes adores her, as fondly as she does him. Walter, I love you—madly love you! Do not think that I have suddenly changed the timidity of my nature, and become bold from recklessness. No, what I now say, I utter from the purest motives that ever sprung from a yet unsullied heart."

"But Lillia——"

"Do not speak to me until I have said all that the promptings of my inmost soul now dictate; for if you check me, even by a look, I shall sink into the earth from shame, and fear that you will upbraid me—will hate me." For a moment she hesitated, as if already her courage was upon the wing. "No," she said, as if addressing herself, "I have considered upon it for many a sleepless night; I have seen myself in the visions of a wandering mind, standing as I do now, speaking as I will speak; I then found strength and words to tell my hopes, and will do so now. Oh, Walter, you cannot guess the joy that is revelling in my heart, for what I am about to say is said to make you happy! Do not think that I am speaking from pride, but as I before told you, my dear, dear, too kind father, was not always what he now appears to be; he

was once a soldier, and one who was high in the estimation of his king, when that king, so lately dead, was worthy of being loyod. I know not all the causes that first led to his altered fortunes, but that which doomed him to pass so many years in this most humble station, was its being discovered that my poor father had imbibed the tenets of the reformed religion: he was compelled to fly from London; the only friend he dared to trust, was Walter Cromwell, father to the Earl of Essex. It was he who placed my father here, as being a refuge of the greatest safety. Here he has lived for many years—I but a few short weeks. At my birth, my mother died; and from that hour, my dear, my only parent, centred all his love, all his hopes in me. I was placed at the convent school, the better to elude the watchful eyes of our religious enemies; but not a day was past but my father came and poured into my longing ears, the purer doctrines of his own pure faith. As I grew up, his anxiety for my welfare was ever his chiefest thought. Oh, how I have heard him sigh, and have often felt a tear fall upon my cheeks as I lay, in sleep, as he believed, and heard him exclaim, ‘Oh, my poor, poor child, if Heaven take me from thee, what will be thy fate? Not one relative, one friend on earth hast thou but me!’ Oh, Walter, when I have heard him say this, my own heart seemed ready to burst!” For a moment Lillia ceased; but, almost immediately, smiling through her tears, she continued—“But now, Walter, comes the happier part of my long story. The convent school having been abolished, I was obliged to be brought here, and I arrived on the very night that you did. Few people ever remain here, so that when you took up your abode under his roof, my father felt at last that he had an inmate with whom he could speak as he was wont to do in former years. The moment the dear old man saw you, he liked you, Walter. I should make you vain, were I to tell you half the kind things he has said of you to me; it was dangerous praise to pour into the ears of one so young and inexperienced as I. Besides himself, you are the only man I have ever spoken to: imagine then, the impression your kind manner and looks made upon my mind. You never said you loved me; but I knew you did, for every little act of yours, spoke with its silent tongue too plainly for my willing heart not to understand its meaning. Oh, how I should blush at what I have already said, were I not about to say that which I feel will sanctify the former! Walter, dear Walter, for many days you have been so altered, that I could not, if I would, but endeavour to find out the hidden cause.—I have discovered it!”

Had a shot passed through his brain, Lerue would scarcely have felt more stunned then he did at, as he thought, his secret being discovered, and that too, by the last being on earth he would have liked to have known it.

“Discovered it!” at last he exclaimed.

“Yes,” said the innocent girl, “I have indeed, Walter;—you are poor!”

The relief he at that moment experienced, gave to his features a most peculiar expression, which Lillia believing to be the effects of wounded pride, at being told he was poor, said—“But, oh, Walter, since I have found that out, I love you a thousand times better than before; and

but for your poverty, you would, perhaps, have never heard the confession I have this day made."

"But how, dear Lillia," he said, "how did you discover my secret, as you call it?"

"Oh," she replied, "you have told me it more than once, although you knew it not. Often, when I have thought you were asleep, I have watched near your door, that none should approach to disturb your slumber, when suddenly you would speak aloud, and always about money. Even this very day, as I was coming near your door, you exclaimed, 'They may starve, but they shall not conquer me,' and something about 'No money yet!' And now, Walter, own that you are poor: I hope you are very—very poor indeed, for then my pleasure will be unbounded."

"What, Lillia, at my being poor!" exclaimed Lerue, at the same time smiling. "Is poverty such a blessing, that you would wish poor Walter to be thus blessed?"

"No, Walter," replied the girl; "but that *I* might be blessed in relieving all your wants. I have told you, you have won the good opinion of my dear father; mine you know you have. My father has saved much, and all he has I know was saved for me: he tells me too, that now King Henry is dead, that perhaps he may become even wealthy. Ask him then openly—fearlessly for his child. You will not be refused, for he would refuse nothing—not even his life, were the losing it to make me happy: then Walter, dear Walter, all I should ever possess will be yours. And now you know the real cause of my seeming boldness: can you hate me for it? Why don't you speak, Walter? Have I done wrong? tell me—tell me! but if I have, it was for your happiness, which, now I have confessed my love, is all I will ever live for."

Lerue was perfectly bewildered; what to say, or what to do, he knew not: to undeceive her at such a moment he felt would be the acme of cruelty: the confiding girl having thrown herself upon his breast as she uttered her last words, was prevented from observing the strange workings of Walter's countenance: his features took alternately the expression of almost every feeling but that of real love: pity, vexation, disgust at his own unthinking, unfeeling folly, in having led a poor innocent child into what he knew must prove hopeless misery, now filled his mind, and for a time, held his tongue spell-bound. At last he said—"Dear Lillia, your unexpected avowal—your generous anxiety for one so truly unworthy as I am, has robbed me of all power to speak my thanks—my gratitude—my——" he hesitated: oh, how she listened for the one word more!—the only one she cared to hear—but, alas! it came not; he never said "my love!"

Fortunately for Lerue, relief came to his aid when most desired; the father's voice was heard calling upon his child: that sound like magic, awoke Lillia from her dream of bliss; for though Lerue spoke not of love, she never for an instant doubted his affection for her; and her joy was in having, as she believed, made him as happy by her confession, as that confession had made herself. As she released herself from his embrace, she looked into his face with such an expression of

confiding truthful devotion, that he had not the power to resist imprinting upon her pure but now willing lips, one kiss of real, of heartfelt kindness. Poor Lillia was for that single moment, the happiest of human beings; she pressed both his hands fervently to her lips—then casting upon him a look of intense affection, hurried from the room.

For several minutes, Lerue stood exactly as she had left him, perfectly lost in thought; at last he said—"Well! this is a pretty climax to my folly. How shall I act? I would not willingly further deceive her, nor would I wound a heart so kind, unselfish, as that I now find she possesses. Who would have dreamt of one so innocent, being in such a place as this? had I been different to what I am, she might have proved a blessing to me. Poor soul! why has fate been so cruel to one deserving of all happiness?—so unjust as to let her cast her whole heart's hopes upon him, who never can requite her? With what simplicity did she detail her strange but generous scheme for extricating me from my poverty! So I am to ask her father for her hand! there are few prettier, it is true, and I doubt me if there be many half so honestly given, as she would bestow hers on me. I wish I had never come here! But it is too late now to think thus: something must be done, and that quickly, or faith, she will have obtained her parent's consent, and I shall be married to the Lilly of the Inn before I am aware of it. She is but a child; and if once I am gone, there is but little doubt she will soon forget me, and all that has passed this day. Yes, absence is the only cure for love's fever."

The clock of the village sounding, reminded Lerue that it was time for him to think of returning to the cottage on the heath.

"I am but in ill plight," he said, "for further gallantries, at such a moment as this; but the common courtesies of life call upon me to make the effort; so I will e'en away. Besides, I would rather the affair of the morning were kept untalked about; for when the body of the man I shot be found, some questions might be asked me, as the principal actor in the death, that, for the present, I should find it unpleasant to answer: how foolish of me not to have thought of that before! I will take the shorter road across the heath, and pray of my new-made friends to keep the secret: the finding of the dead body of a robber is no such great wonder now-a-days, so the thing will, as usual, soon be forgotten."

Lerue hurried away, and to his great relief, unseen by Lillia, whom he felt he should henceforth dread to meet, until he had determined upon the course he should take. As he walked along, buried in thought, he accidentally turned into the wrong road, and never discovered his mistake, until slipping upon something smooth beneath his feet, he found he was standing in a quantity of congealed blood. He involuntarily started back, and casting his eye quickly around, found he was in the very situation where the man he shot had fallen; but, strange to say, no corse lay there. He hastened on, and soon after entered the cottage, where he found the whole contents of the portfolio he had left with his fair friends arranged around the apartment, and being still admired by both Alyce and her daughter. One circumstance rather annoyed him, for he discovered now, that in this collection were all the sketches he

had taken of the Lilly of the Inn. These caused Ann to be prodigal indeed of praise, for she pronounced the likenesses to be perfect.

"Ah," said Anne, half sighing, "she is a sweet girl, the most amiable but most childish of human beings: her thoughts are ever on her tongue. What she feels she must give utterance to."

Lerue felt, in its fullest sense, the justness of this remark, which brought to his mind the whole scene, he had but so lately taken part in. He could not help remarking to himself the coincidence of these two sweet girls, the one loving him, the other, by him beloved; both going through almost the same actions, speaking nearly the same words, for now Anne was as profuse in the praise of Lillia, as the latter had been of the Beauty of the Heath. She too, now related how they had been for years together at the convent school. It was true, the one resided entirely within the walls, the other for merely a few hours of each day.

Lerue, who knew all before, felt constrained to put on an air of interest and surprise at what he heard. Again he had to listen to the story of the father having been formerly a soldier—of his superior birth: Alyce spoke much; "For," she said, "now young Edward was upon the throne, it was expected he would restore the old man to his rights." She told Lerue, that for many years she had known who and what he was; and how highly he was respected by all the country round; and that Walter Cromwell, who had befriended him, had also befriended her, and all she held dear; and was just about to enter more fully into the truth of who they, themselves, were, when Anne gently checked her mother, by saying—"This gentleman, mother, can feel but little interest in the affairs of people so simple, as the family of Master Allen." The name of *Allen* she particularly emphasised.

Alyce stopped herself at once, for she knew the merchant's wish still to remain under his assumed title.

Lerue took an early opportunity of relating the strange chance which had led him to the spot of the morning's adventure, and of the disappearance of the robber's body; and then took occasion to say, that if they had not already mentioned the circumstance, it were, perhaps, as well to be altogether silent upon the subject; particularly, as there remained no evidence, beyond a pool of blood, that such an occurrence had taken place at all. This feeling being so completely in accordance with their own, for more than all did they shun publicity, that it was at once determined, that beyond an account being sent to the merchant, no further notice should be taken.

So agreeable did Walter Lerue render his conversation to both mother and child, and so charmed had he become, particularly with the lovely Anne, that Time, who never will lag upon his course, when he is wished to do so, flew by at a prodigious rate; and several hours had been born and died, since it would have been seemly on the part of Lerue to have terminated his visit, had that visit been, as believed to be, merely one or ceremony, mixed with good feeling. Walter had a peculiar tact in making himself appear at once as an old friend, and so completely had he succeeded in this respect, before he left the cottage, that Anne not only had displayed to him all her own drawings, which, of course, he praised far beyond their real deserts, but had more than once, at his

request, taken up her lute, and sang to him some of her sweetest ditties ; the one he appeared to admire the most, ran thus—

What is that strain, so sad—so sweet,
Yon maiden singe, with weeping eyes ?
Is it some tale of man's deceit—
Of broken vöws—of tears and sighs ?
Or is it, what few e'er reveal—
The maddening sting, that oft will prove
The bitterest pang the heart can feel—
Is it of—unrequited love ?

That is the theme yon maiden singe—
That is the cause those eyes now weep—
That is the magic power which brings,
As 'twere a spell, to banish sleep—
That to those wakeful hours may steal
The phantom jealousy, to prove
The bitterest pang the heart can feel,
Is that of unrequited love.

There was a sadness in the air, even more powerful than the melancholy attempted to be depicted by the words, which sank deeply into the heart of Lerue, for he thought, at the moment, how truthfully might such a song be sung by poor Lillia.

"I cannot help thinking," observed Lerue, "that I have heard the same ditty, or surely one breathing a like sentiment, many years ago ; and as you were chanting the sweet air, there came upon your features an expression, which reminded me of a face I had seen before ; but where, or when, or under what circumstances, I cannot, for my life, bring to recollection—were you ever in London ?"

"I was born there," replied Anne, "on Old London Bridge !"

"But for these eight years," said Alyce, "she has resided here upon the heath."

"No !" said Lerue ; "it was neither on the old bridge, or on this heath, that I believe I have before seen that face : " saying this, the young artist fancied himself authorized to look intently upon the features of the lovely Anne : he gazed so long, and with such an unmistakable expression of admiration, that our heroine was fain to turn her head aside to conceal the deep blush his enchanted looks had raised. "I have it !" he suddenly exclaimed : "yes, memory has looked back and back upon itself, until it has met with the very object that should stay its further course. Do not feel offended when I tell you of the vision, as it were, that has so often floated before my mind, and caused me to think that we had met in former times. It is now some years since, but the impression was so strong, that now it seems but as yesterday. You will smile, I am sure, when I tell you, that she who so completely resembled you, was a child, acting at the fair of St. Bartholomew : she was called the Venus, and well deserving of the name she was, for such perfection of form and feature—such beauty of—Heavens !" he ejaculated, as he turned and looked upon the face of Anne ; it was one living flame !

"Dear, dear Anne," exclaimed Alyce, starting to her child, "you are

ill. Oh, sir," she continued, addressing Walter Lerue, "leave us, I beseech you: she will be better—far better with me alone."

Lerue felt doubly inclined to stay, were it only by his assiduity to prove the interest he took in the fair girl; but his gentleman-like feelings restrained him from further intrusion, and taking a hurried, but kind farewell, and saying in a few words all that could be said upon such an occasion, he departed.

"Oh, mother, mother!" exclaimed Anne, the moment he was gone, and at the same time bursting into tears, as she sank her head upon the bosom of Alyce, "I thought I should have died as he was speaking. In a moment, mother, every scene of all that wretched time of my early life, flew like ghosts before my eyes. I saw the fiends that then were ever around me; that dreadful woman I called my mother, stood there; yes, there, plainly as I see you now: the poor old man, too, my only friend, I saw—and then a feeling of shame called all the blood from out my heart into my face. I felt it rush then, but why, I know not; for why should I feel shame at that, the which I had no power to prevent; and yet I do often and often feel that I would not for worlds have any one know the life I once was compelled to lead, although then but a poor helpless child!"

Alyce did all that a fond mother could do, to remove the sad feelings the chance words of Lerue had conjured up. We must now leave the fair ones of the heath, and once more return to OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

* * * The revel anew,
Till that the bright sun had lost his hue,
I'or the horizon had 'rest the sun his light;
Thus is as much to say as it was night.

CHAUCER.

NIGHT had long tired of its dark and lonely life, and seemed to be thinking seriously of wedding itself to morning, ere the revellers at the Cardinal's Hat, gave indication of retiring to their various homes. But be it known, that this was the second night of revelry—it was the night of the coronation, and was now at the guests' own charge; and pretty well the host did charge them.

The jolly vintner, Blassinjaw, was the first to show signs of inebriety, but the last to talk of allowing his dear friends to leave him. It was quite extraordinary how any man, so unsteady as mine host had become, could, when he pushed his penny, by a jerk of the hand along the table, upon which chalk lines had been drawn, send the money exactly to the winning point. Not a guest there had a chance against him at this same game of shovel-board; no, not even Spikely, who remained the soberest of the party.

What caused great wonder, in those who had managed to retain enough sense to wonder at anything, was to think where the host's winnings went to, for so great had they been, that his pouch might have been filled half a dozen times over, and yet it always seemed nearly empty.

At last, all the rest of the party having lost every farthing they had brought with them, Brassinjaw, in a most unsteady voice, observed, "That, perhaps, a little bed would be of infinite service to some of his dear friends, particularly to such as found it rather inconvenient to stand."

This wise remark was hailed with cheers, and every man began to hug his neighbour in the most affectionate manner, and many even shed tears at parting; and, as one went one way, and another the other, they simultaneously swore that nothing should separate them as long as they existed.

There were four certainly of the party, who seemed determined to carry this vow into effect, for, before they left the lower room, Checklocke, Catchemayde, Silkworm, and the sharp nosed little arrow-maker, linked their arms together, and thus tied, as it were, endeavoured to mount the steep and narrow stairs: they had all ascended some way, when the sharp nosed little arrow-maker, swearing that he would stand by them to the last, slipped his foot, and dragged the whole of them backwards into the room; this misfortune seemed but to rivet them closer in the bonds of amity. Nothing could tempt them to leave go of each other; so the other guests managed to lift them up, and placed them on their feet, chained as they were in friendship's tie.

Their next effort to reach the top of the stairs proving more successful, they soon found themselves in the open air upon the Bridge. Seeing a light still burning in the merchant's house, they knocked loudly at the door, and then gave three cheers "For honest Master Hewet;" this they immediately followed by all the abusive epithets they could lay their tongues to:—"He should never be Lord Mayor, they'd eat him first; and since they were now constables —"

This last word seemed to change all their ideas in a moment; for, it must be known, they had been lately enrolled in the constabulary force, for the purpose of protecting their neighbourhood against all immoral people, particularly drunkards. So, now their sense of duty rushing like a torrent upon them, they turned against each other, and swore they would take one another up for being intoxicated: this brought on a serious scuffle, which ended in their determining, as they could not take themselves up, they would exert their resistless power elsewhere.

Catchemayde, and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker at once commanded an immediate attack upon the thieves in the Clink. "They would rout them out; they would not sneak away, as the Lord Mayor had done a night or two before. No, no; they would tie them all back to back, and in the morning they would lead them by a rope in triumph to Guildhall."

This appearing such a legitimate vent for their pot-valiancy, that, once more linking their arms together, they hastened towards that sink of vice and wretchedness, the Clink. It so happened that the "Bishop of Winchester's birds" were taking a flight that night in search of prey, so that the lanes were perfectly clear, when the four redoubtables emerged from beneath the black arch, and still finding themselves unopposed, they set up a shout of defiance.

"What!" exclaimed the smith, "have you all fled at our approach?—dare not one of you show his nose, in case we should pull it off? Oh,

oh ! we have caught you have we ?" he bawled out, while at the same time he pointed up to a window, from which a man's head was thrust. Seeing this they all exclaimed, as with one voice—"Surrender! surrender! surrender!"

"You be d—d!" was the only reply they received.

"Come down, and surrender!" squeaked out the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker. "Know, villain, that we are constables—constables! do you hear that! So tremble, and surrender!"

"But wouldn't you like more than one of us, my masters?" said the man, giving a vulgar, brutal laugh.

"A hundred, if we can catch them!" roared out Catchemayde; "not one less than a hundred will satisfy me!"

"Well, we must see what we can do to please you." Having said this, the man thrust his fingers into his mouth, against his tongue, and then sent forth a whistle, so loud and shrill, that it seemed to call forth echoes for miles around. Scarcely a second elapsed, before another whistle, of like power and shrillness replied; and then another, and another, and another.

These extraordinary sounds flying about in every direction, appeared rather to awaken the four invincibles from their drunkenness; and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, although he could not believe it possible, yet felt almost certain that he trembled:

Often had they been linked together arm-in-arm, but never had they been so tightly linked together as now; but, strange to say, some magic thought appearing suddenly to have touched all their minds at once, which, causing a repulsive action to take place, they all flew four different ways, as hard as their legs could carry them.

Silkworm and Checklocke fortunately took the right road from the Clink; not so poor Catchemayde, and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, who, rushing into two alleys, each flew into the arms of about fifty ruffians; they were at once dragged off towards the black arch, for the thieves knew that to be the spot whence the first whistle had been heard.

By this time, the man at the window had descended, and was dancing about quite frantically, and laughing and roaring out, "Huzza, huzza, my Bishop's Birds! we've caught a constable—caught a constable, and glorious fun we'll have!"

Never were seen two such poor miserable wretches as Catchemayde and his valiant friend appeared, as they approached the man whom they had but a moment before so insolently defied; fear had completely sobered them both; and now their only thought was, how to save their own lives, no matter, though it were at the sacrifice of goods, chattels, friends, relations, and all. But how to do it? The arrow-maker threw himself upon his knees, and prayed for his life.

This caused a roar of laughter, and a loud call from the leader of the thieves, to know whether there were yet a hundred present—"For you must know, my brother Birds, that not one, no, not one less than a hundred, will satisfy this cormorant of a constable." Saying this, he gave Catchemayde's nose a dreadful twist, which made the blood spirt



A pleasant position

all over him, and caused him to utter a scream, so excruciating was the pain.

"Silence!" exclaimed a woman, "silence! or if you can't hold your tongue, we'll hold it for you, with a pair of red-hot tongs."

"But time wears," said the leader of this lawless band, "and justice must be satisfied. When a boy robs a bird's nest, and carries off a young linnet or two, what's done to him? Why, he's well thrashed, is not he? for if he must steal, he should learn to steal something that's worth the stealing; but if a rascally hawk will come and poke his nose into a Bishop's nest, and want to hook out a hundred full-grown birds, what ought he to be done to?"

"Plucked and roasted alive!" said the woman who had before spoken. "But *you* know, brother, what's the best to do in such a case; and it's my advice," she continued, addressing those around her, "it's my advice to leave the handling of these fools to the mercy of Bludgeon Billy, our leader here."

"Leave 'em to him, leave 'em to him!" exclaimed nearly every man at once.

The leader bearing, as we have just heard, the euphous title of Bludgeon Billy, made a sort of bow, in acknowledgment of the honour such a marked deference to his ideas of justice had conferred on him. "Then thus I decree, and from which there is no appeal!" The two prisoners trembled from head to foot, as the ruffian continued—"First, tie them back to back." Scarcely was the command given, before poor Catchemayde and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker found themselves fastened securely, with their backs to each other. "We will now haul them up to yonder beam, and roast them alive, until they are half done—cut off their ears, and, as a treat, the one shall eat the ears of the other."

"Oh, mercy, mercy!" exclaimed the two poor wretches.

"Yes," said Bludgeon Billy, laughing, "you shall have mercy—lots of mercy—just such mercy as our people receive from you, when they are tied to the stake in Smithfield. When thus much of the sentence has been fulfilled, we will hunt them through the filth of the Clink, and when we're tired start them to their friends in the city, as examples to all meddling fools that dare invade the kingdom of the Clink. To it, my Birds—pick 'em, and pluck 'em, and hang 'em to roast!"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed the thieves, and in an instant all was bustle, swearing, laughing—cries from the victims—shouts of derision from the rabble. The rope was thrown over the beams, and poor Catchemayde and his now other half, were hanging by the axa-pits; under which the rope had been passed, screaming and kicking about, to the great delight and merriment of the crowd below, many of whom were busily employed heaving up straw, and flags, and broken wood, to make the fire beneath them.

The agony the poor creatures suffered may easily be imagined, as the smoke and fire began to ascend. Despair was rapidly seizing upon the little consciousness that fear had left them, when their ears were startled by loud shouts being heard approaching through the passage of the Black Arch. They thought that more of the thieves were returning, until they

perceived a sudden panic seizing upon the ruffians below. All was in confusion, many arming themselves as quickly as they could, with whatever weapon their hands could catch hold of. The women were hurrying away, as if to fetch more aid. Many of the men drew forth long knives; others having procured wooden staves, or iron bars, and some even arming themselves with large stones, they all together rushed beneath the Black Arch to meet the danger, whatever that might be.

All this time the fire was increasing, and poor Catchemayde, with his companion in affliction, incessantly imploring to be released, but no one heeded them; the women who had but recently left the ground, now returned, bringing with them many additional ruffians, all well armed; the women also were armed with knives, and brandishing them over their heads, they followed their male companions through the arch.

It was not difficult to comprehend that a dreadful collision had already taken place; the air was now filled with screams of women, curses or men, and shouts of defiance and of rage; many returned covered with blood; some with broken heads; others with broken arms, or wounded limbs; one or two were carried past, apparently dead; from the increasing number of the fugitives, it was evident the thieves, for once, were being worsted. At last the main body came from under the arch, apparently driven backwards by a superior power; fortunately, for the poor creatures who were hanging from the beam, the crowds were forced across the fire, who, kicking it here and there, made the scene more awful to look upon, but at the same time, saved the two intended victims from a dreadful death.

The thieves—of whom great numbers had, as we have before stated, gone on a robbing expedition—who remained in the Clink, soon found the force now brought against them perfectly resistless. The two leaders of the attacking party, fought with a determination against which there was no standing; each seemed endeavouring to outvie the other; for pride as well as courage appeared to actuate them both.

"You shan't outdo me, Master Edward!" exclaimed the Bridge-shooter, for he it was, with Osborne, who now was heading several scores of city apprentices, armed, as usual, with their resistless clubs; "you shan't outdo me—there!—and there!—and there!" he bawled out, as at every blow a ruffian fell to the ground.

Edward went more coolly, but not less determinedly to work; he remembered for what purpose they had been called out, merely to rescue Catchemayde and his companion, so that all he aimed at, was to cut his way through the crowd of thieves, until he should find those he came to save.

The sharp-nosed little arrow-maker and Catchemayde, notwithstanding all their shouting to be released, were never observed, being, as they were, so far above the heads of the combatants.

So desperate had been the onset of the apprentices, that in a few minutes more, the whole space before the Black Arch was clear of an opponent, and then it was the perilous but ridiculous situation in which their friends were dangling, was first perceived by Edward and his companions. In spite of every feeling of pity and humanity, they could

not resist having a hearty laugh at the expense of poor Catchemayde, and little sharp-nose.

"Never mind, never mind!" said the two, as they were being lowered down; "only let us once more set foot upon Old London Bridge, and if ever we are caught attempting to put salt upon the tails of the Bishop's Birds, may we be picked to death for our pains, say we!"

How this fortunate rescue had been accomplished, was owing, principally, to the circumstance of Edward Osborne having sat up late that night, to see the Bridge-shooter the moment he arrived from Hampton, where he was to leave Flora; but from various causes, such delays had happened to William on his road, that several hours had elapsed since the time at which he should have reached the Bridge, and it was almost morning when Edward opened the outer door to admit him.

Edward had scarcely commenced informing the Bridge-shooter of the affairs that would require them astir at daybreak, when they were alarmed by a violent knocking at the door, and cries for help and rescue.

It appeared, that when Silkworm and Checklocke had effected their escape, they hurried to the Bridge, and observing the light still in the merchant's house, it at once struck them that Edward Osborne was, of all people, the most likely to aid in the rescue of their two unfortunate companions.

The moment Edward and the Bridge-shooter heard what had happened, they lost not a moment in giving the alarm to those, whom they knew would not be backward in such a cause, and this being the night of the coronation, there were plenty of the wine-houses still filled with the very boys they wanted to assist them.

A word from Edward, beloved as he was by almost every apprentice of the city, was quite sufficient to raise an army of youths who knew the use of the club, and who had courage enough to employ it against a legion of fiends, were they told to do so by a leader whom they liked and confided in; such a leader was Edward, and a better lieutenant than Billy the Bridge-shooter could not have been found betwixt the old Bridge and Wapping: how quickly they were in the Clink, and what good service they there performed, the reader is already aware of.

"If I might pop in a little bit of advice," said the Bridge-shooter, "knowing, as I do, somewhat of the whereabouts of these rascals, I should say, having gained our end, the sooner we sound an honourable retreat the better; by the comparatively small numbers that I saw, there is some other expedition going on elsewhere; and if those who are away, were to return just now, ten to one but the honour we have gained might still be tarnished before we were safe again in our beds."

"Right, right!" exclaimed the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, "and I and Catchemayde will lead you back in triumph." He did not wait for a reply, but placing himself in the very foremost rank of those nearest the line of march leading from the Clink, began to move on.

As they were passing under the dark arch, a man closely muffled up met them, and as he passed close to Edward, muttered some words, but so indistinctly, he could not clearly make them out; he turned back, and the Bridge-shooter being close behind, he said, "Did you observe that man just passed?"

"I did," replied William, "and what I did see of him, was not much to admire!"

"Did you hear what he muttered as he went by?"

"He said—'Oh, 'tis you, young sir, is it?' but whether he meant you, or me, or any other of the dozen that were close by, I know not. Shall I after him and ask?"

"On no account," said Edward; "it matters not to us whom he meant; so let us on as quickly as we can, for see, the day is breaking!"

When they reached the Bridge, the early risers were already preparing for the new day's labour; while, every here and there, were seen jovial parties seeking their houses, after a right loyal carouse, in honour of the young king's coronation.

While these scenes of noise and desperate encounter had been enacting at the Clink, one of a different stamp had passed in the Cardinal's Hat, between Brassinjaw and the villain Spikely. The moment the house was clear of the roysterers, Brassinjaw threw off the mask of drunkenness under which he had been acting, and cheating his customers at shovel-board, and thus addressed Spikely—"Now, Master Spikely, although years have passed since we met, and may have caused many a change around us, yet, do I suspect, that we ourselves are so little changed in mind, that there need be no useless beating about the bush before we come to a clear, an honest—don't stare, man—I say honest understanding with each other: when we last parted, we parted enemies—how do we meet?"

"As friends, an thou wilt!" replied Spikely, "for since you have jumped into the shoes of him who owned this tavern when I fled from England, I see not why you should not jump into all his other business too. I shall feel his loss but little, since he has left such a worthy representative as Master Brassinjaw. As the work I come upon must pay us both well, I suppose the bargain of friendship between us is already settled?"

"It is!" replied the host, "I am your sworn ally—that is, if, as you seem to promise, you can make it worth my while—not else!"

"Of that you shall be the judge," said Spikely; "listen!"

"First," observed Brassinjaw, "let me disgorge my winnings, for they are somewhat heavy, and bear me down behind!"

Saying this, he thrust his hand into a kind of pocket made in the back part of his dress, from which he produced all he had won; his system being when he gamed, to appear to put his money into his pouch, but really, only to drop a single piece therein, retaining the remainder in the palm of his hand—"palming," is a conjuror's trick, and by practice, can be brought to great perfection; he afterwards took occasion, when unperceived, to deposit what he had been thus holding, into his secret pocket behind. This manœuvre he resorted to, in order to be able, when any dispute arose regarding his great run of luck, to bluster, and swear that "none there had won so little as he," and then, to prove the assertion, he would, with seeming honest indignation, cast the whole contents of his pouch upon the table, in order that the doubters might count his gains, and convince themselves.

This we may presume was a common trick with cheats in those days,

for Spikely took no heed of what Brassinjaw was doing, nor evinced the slightest surprise at the large quantity of coin the host produced, and, which he carefully tied in a strong bag, and then locked securely in a cupboard, well barred with iron, which was built in the stone wall. This agreeable occupation being finished, mine host seating himself at the opposite side of the table, gave signs to Spikely that he was ready to listen to whatever communication he might wish to make.

"You hate Horton?" said Spikely, with a look that seemed to enquire, and answer its own enquiry at once. "I know it," he continued, "for he used you scurvily enough in former times, notwithstanding all I used to do to make him honest to you."

"We'll not lose time," said Brassinjaw, "in talking of your *honest* wishes—but to the point. You say I hate him—I do!"

"Otherwise," continued Spikely, "I would not trust you. Know, then, that bound as he and I were once by mutual interest, that interest having vanished, the bonds are severed. He knew I held a secret that was like a rope about his neck; I had but to speak the word, and that rope would have squeezed his life out."

"And it shall!" said Brassinjaw, at the same time clenching his hand and grinning malignantly; "that is, if you but let me catch one end on't, and he be now alive!"

"He is, but he believes *me* dead!" As Spikely said this, his countenance appeared that of a fiend. "Yes, thanks to his kind intentions, he believes me dead—dead, and rotting beneath the sod of a foreign land. When, on the fall of Cromwell, we both fled, we entered as mercenaries into the service of the Emperor; and many a bloody scene of war we mixed in. By some good luck for him, for the devil always takes care of his own, he ever gained the greatest share of spoils and plunder, I the most hard knocks. But my secret ever made his purse my own, so it mattered little, that the gold passed through my agent's hands, for thus I used to call him. At last, so goaded was he by my ever-renewing wants, that I felt I had strained the cord too tight; so I thought it better to look some little to my own safety. I therefore shifted my quarters from the band to which he belonged, intending for a time to keep aloof from him. In the last battle, and a frightful one it was, I fell to the earth wounded, as I thought, to death; but it proved not so. When I recovered my senses, I gazed around; the battle was over, and from the stragglers about, who were first robbing, and then burying the dead, I knew by their dress that our party had gained the day. So great had been the loss of blood I had sustained, and so severe the wounds I had received, that not one inch could I raise myself from off the earth; my dress being but of the poorest, those who came near enough to hear my feeble calls for help, cast but a glance upon my rags, which holding out no temptation to their avarice, passed on, caring not a jot whether I lived or died. At last, who should I perceive approaching but Horton. Monster as I knew him to be, I never believed he could have proved the fiend he did. By a violent effort, I succeeded at last in raising my arm to attract his notice; but so intent was he upon the work of despoiling the dead, that for some time he perceived me not. Presently turning towards the spot where I was lying, I exerted the whole of my little

remaining strength, and called him by his name. When he saw by whom he had been addressed, his countenance became suddenly deadly pale; I had seen that look before, and trembled, for in an instant his fell intent flashed through my mind. No other soul was near. I know he held me in deadly hate, and wished my death; I was resistless, and in his power. As he approached me, I saw him deliberately take from its sheath his knife; he looked around—no one was near; think what I felt at that dread moment: as he came nearer, affrighted nature gave me power to scream. ‘‘Tis hopeless to call for aid,’ he said, as he grinned at me like a devil; ‘you laughed at me once for my childish fears at being a murderer: I am now a man, and no longer fear to look on, or shed man’s blood: it is but justice that you who taught me, should have some share of the harvest of your tuition—die, wretch!’ he shouted in my ear. I heard no more—but I felt one pang as he stabbed his knife into my neck—and then my senses fled.”

“But how,” enquired Brassinjaw, “did you escape alive at last?”

“By a miracle, if such things be!” replied Spikely, “and by a miracle that would have made even the saintly Father Brassinjaw of former times raise up his hands in wonder. When consciousness returned, I at first believed I was already in the other world, for by my side was sitting what I thought to be an angel of heaven; but turning my head the other way, there sat, what seemed to me a fiend awaiting my guilty soul. I smile at my fears now, but at that moment, worn down by anguish of body, childish in mind from weakness and loss of blood, I can tell you, my master, my feelings were none to be envied. But now comes the strangest part of all: for who think you my preserver was?—the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower!—The angel by my side—the blind girl, Eoline!”

Brassinjaw certainly did give a look of astonishment; but perceiving Spikely about to proceed, held his peace.

“It appeared,” continued the latter, “that after the battle, the Cripple had gone to the field, to render all the service he might to the wounded or the dying. I had been thrown upon a heap of dead, intended for burial: fancying he saw in me some signs of still-lingering life, he bore me in his arms to his own cottage, just without the town. Although there was but little chance of my recovery, they never gave up hope, but tended me like an infant, and thus, by their unceasing care, I was saved from death. One more of our old friends was there, and one whom I used most scurvily—the Abbess of St. Clair; but she forgave me; and one night when I thought I was dying, and being half delirious, I—but, pshaw!—my story has already been long enough; the end of all, is all I ever care for—I recovered, and here I am! And now I am sworn to hunt to death the villain Horton. I will serve all that he would wrong, be whom they may, I want revenge upon *him*, and that I’ll gain, though I be hanged by the same rope in gaining it.”

Spikely now told Brassinjaw, that Horton was the real murderer of Sir Filbut Fussay; but that he himself having been so deeply implicated in the affair, and Brassinjaw, although not connected with the knight’s death, being so mixed up with the continued robbing of Sir Filbut, that they would take their revenge in a way more safe for themselves, than by a public denunciation. What their ultimate plans were, time will show.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Her bright hair combed was untressed all.

CHAUCER.

As LERUE sauntered along towards the oastery of the ferry, the awkward position he found himself placed in, on account of the young girl Lillia, came very forcibly upon his mind; the only point upon which he could then determine was, that he must immediately remove from his present quarters, but as to his shandoning the vicinity of the heath, such a step he could not bring his mind to contemplate. Anne had made dreadful havoc with the feelings of his heart, and some of it what might, he felt it to be impossible to quit so bright a treasure, just at the moment, he flattered himself, the full possession of it might be obtained. By the time he reached the inn, it was rather late in the night; he had purposely loitered on his way, in order that the host and his child might, at least, have retired to rest.

Just as he was entering the door of his apartment, which, toward conscience made him do on tip-toe, that he might not be heard, he was startled by a gentle voice pronouncing his name; he turned; it was Lillia standing by him.

"I could not go to rest, Walter," said the girl, "until I knew you were safe: there have been such desperate people about here lately, that no one, it is said, is secure after nightfall, so that I have been picturing to myself all kinds of dreadful things; but now I know you are here, I shall to sleep quickly—happily!"

"You're a foolish child, Lillia," replied Lerue, "to think so much about such a worthless fellow as Walter Lerue. I am not sorry, though, since you are up, for I should have been annoyed at leaving here to-morrow morning——"

"Oh, Walter!" exclaimed Lillia, with an imploring look, "leave here to-morrow, and wherefore?—but you will soon return?"

"Why, not for some little time," he replied; "it is necessary that I go to London. You know, Lillia, one cannot live without money."

"I wish we could," said the girl; "we should be much happier—at least I should, for then you need not leave me ever again. But why not, instead of seeking it elsewhere, speak to my father? If once he consents to give me to you, you need not fear his giving all else you may ever ask!"

"There are reasons, my poor, generous girl, that render such a step at this moment impossible; there are family reasons, which I will one day explain!"

"He says," said Lillia, "an artist is worthy any man's child; and that talent in itself is a nobility; so you need not be afraid he will refuse on that account!"

Lerue could not resist a smile at poor Lillia's innocent show of her own family pride. At last he induced her to retire, her whole heart

beating with happiness, for Lerue promised, the moment he could do so with propriety, to write to the father; he told her not upon what subject, but her eyes then looking into her own heart, she saw but one subject, and she doubted not but that in his own he there beheld the same. Thus then they parted; Lillia to dreams, filled with all those fairy visions which young love so much delights in raising before the imagination of his votaries; and Lerue, to think upon another; but as he pictured the Beauty of the Heath to his enraptured fancy, the little Lilly of the Inn seemed to drop dewy pearls upon the picture, that damped its native brightness.

Edward Osborne, although he had not heard for some days from the cottage, was plodding on in his usual quiet, unexcited manner, for he augured from Anne's silence, that all was going on as monotonously and as well as usual at the Heath; in short, he was almost congratulating himself upon the happy peaceful tenure of his life, when at last the loitering epistle from his young mistress arrived. He was very busy upon some important affairs, which he could not leave at that instant, his master having sailed for the Continent, by which the whole weight of their vast concerns fell upon his shoulders; and expecting the letter to contain merely the usual "All's well," he placed it in the pocket of his vest, and for the present thought no more about it; nor indeed did he remember its receipt until he had retired to his own chamber for the night. In taking off his vest, he felt the letter.

"How forgetful of me, to be sure!" said Osborne, breaking the seal; "for although it doubtless requires no immediate notice, I ought to have read it ere this." It ran thus—

'DEAR BROTHER,

'It is seldom I have to write to you upon subjects more exciting than perhaps an account of our increasing stock in the poultry-yard, or of Roger having slipped his foot into the milk-pail, which, you know, he did, not a week ago, and then, to amend his fault, endeavoured to scoop up the milky stream with his cap, declaring "What was saved would do very well for puddings:" but now, dear Edward, open thine eyes, and devour a tale of real romance. I have began this letter thus ridiculously to prove before hand, that although there was much to alarm, and indeed some positive danger, yet no real harm has happened to us.

"Danger! alarm!" said Edward; and then, as people often do, he asked himself the question of "What can it mean?" instead of at once looking for the solution where it was sure to be found, namely, in the letter, which was written purposely to explain. Having looked very wise, for a moment, but not being able to give himself a satisfactory answer, he recommenced reading.

'She detailed to him the whole circumstances of which the reader is already aware—of how they had peeped at the ghost whilst sketching—of the attack of the two ruffians, whom she described so accurately, that Osborne knew at once that they must have been the same who stopped him and the merchant.'

He became intensely excited at that part of the letter relating their

flight from, and their being pursued by the robbers—he almost fancied he could hear the gun, and see the ruffian fall.

‘And now, who do you think,’ wrote Ann, ‘was our preserver? No other but the ghost! and a nicer young man—I have never beheld—I would have said, *handsomer*; but my mother will have it he is like me—and she says that people who are alike very often marry each other. Is not that delightful, Edward? Only think of my being married!’

Osborne rested the letter upon his lap, and having looked very thoughtful for some seconds, he said—“How extraordinary—nay, wonderful, that up to this very moment that she tells me to do so, I should never once have thought of her being married!—Married!” he repeated, as if by repetition of the word he should better understand its meaning; “Anne married! and why should she not be? Although I have scarcely noticed her altered form, she is now not the little child so deeply fixed in my memory, but a woman, and one that all mankind might covet. Heigho!” He had no idea why he sighed, but sigh he certainly did, and then again took up the letter.

‘You know I am in jest, Edward, when I say this: marriage is rather too serious an undertaking to determine upon at a moment’s notice; nor do I think I ever shall marry. Can you believe it to be little Anne writing all this nonsense? But I will try to be as serious as you always are. Well, then—this our preserver is called Walter Lerue: he is an artist, and a very clever one indeed: before we knew him, he had taken twenty likenesses of me, only from seeing me at a distance—was not that clever?’

“Clever!” he exclaimed, with a sneer; “I think it unpardonably impertinent. I am certain I shall dislike that man, notwithstanding the services he has done—but I’ll go on.”

‘Was not that clever? But ours are not the only likenesses he has succeeded in—he has made an equal number of my sweet schoolfellow, Lillia; you know whom I mean, although you have never seen her. By-the-by, Edward, what a darling little wife Lillia would make for you!’

“Hang her little wives!” he exclaimed, quite pettishly; “she had much better recommend her sweet schoolfellow to her handsome artist. I never thought Anne’s letters long before, but this one seems endless;” and he once more began to read.

‘We want you, Edward, to copy what I have written about our new-found friend, and forward it to my dear father, and then we wish you to make all the enquiries you can about Master Lerue—his other name is Walter—it will not give you much trouble, for being so clever, he must be known very well in London.’

“Walter Lerue,” said Edward, “there is an old artist of that name, can it be he? But I had forgotten, Anne? Walter—” these words he uttered quite spitefully—“Anne’s Walter is a nice *young* man; it may be his son though; I’ll enquire about that; I think the old one bears a very bad character; indeed, I know he does: if he be the son of such a man, the sooner the connexion be broken off the better.”

‘The more he read of the letter, the more he became annoyed by the

‘frequency of the name of Walter Lerue, meeting his eye in almost every other line.’

“It is very remarkable,” he observed, “that Anne has said *dear* Edward but once, throughout this interminable epistle; I hope she will not, like the generality of the world, forget her old friends in her admiration of her new. Heigho! I think it would drive me mad were she ever to marry any one unworthy of her—*unworthy* of her? where shall we look for one that can be *worthy* of her?”

Poor Edward was quite astonished, that, highly as he had always appreciated Anne’s goodness, and even her beauty, it seemed to him that it was only at that very moment he had for the first time discovered even one half of her excellencies. Did we not fear to lower our hero in the estimation of our readers, we should be tempted to confess, that at one moment, during the darkness of the night—a time when the mind of man will lose somewhat of its strength, and when he was picturing to himself her blessing some happy being with her hand, he actually wept—it was but for an instant—he felt ashamed at his weakness, so offered up a prayer for her happiness, wed with whom she might, fell fast asleep, and dreamt that he was marrying her himself.

It was odd enough, but the letter he returned to Anne, caused to her almost as much uneasiness as hers had to him. In spite of all his efforts to the contrary, there was a sadness in the turn of thought he could not help giving to the most trivial circumstance, and more than once, in speaking of marriage, he concluded that sentence with—“but I will never marry.”

Anne was fearful that in some way, although innocently on her part, she had given her childhood’s playmate pain; but how? She endeavoured to retrace in her memory every line she had written, but could find nothing that to her mind could be construed into unkindness; indeed she had intended it to be a very kind letter; but, should she have been betrayed into some unthinking expression that might have wounded him, she determined when they next met, she would amply atone by redoubled kindness.

Lerue having, as he had told Lillia he should do, gone to London for a supply of money, was detained there longer than he had expected to be, or, indeed, than he wished to be, for his Beauty of the Heath had so completely fascinated his every thought, that to return was now his only wish. When he did return, alas, for poor Lillia! it was not to her abode, but to a farm house on the other side of the heath.

The morning after his arrival, he was up by times, took particular pains with his toilet, and, long before the hour that politeness could sanction, he found himself on the road towards the cottage. The nearer he approached that new haven of his hopes, the more he felt that a visit at such an unusual hour would seem strange, particularly for one who was as yet but little more than a stranger; so, turning up towards the higher part of the heath, he strolled about listlessly, with no other point in view than that of killing time.

The morning was superb, and all nature appeared in such bright attire, that Lerue became, by degrees, enchanted with his ramble; here



The Fair Student

he stopped to sketch an old oak tree—there a romantic gate, that had but lately led to some sacred edifice. On he strolled—and on ran time, so fast, indeed, that it was now near mid-day when he found himself still far from the Cottage of the Heath, but very near the ruined chapel. There was an attractive something about this spot, for here the lovely Anne had first seen him; so he thought, that, as it was not far from his straight road, he would visit it again, and endeavour to bring back to memory all he had thought of when last there, and then compare such thoughts with those he now experienced.

As he approached the ruin, he was astonished at hearing, sung by a low and sweet voice, the very air which he was accustomed to play, and with which he had alarmed the merchant's family. He stole gently towards the opening in the ruin, when, oh, rapture! he there beheld his soul's idol, the lovely Anne, singing, and sketching the ruined cross.

This was an opportunity that, to his romantic imagination, seemed brought about by fate, and one he could not muster forbearance to neglect.—“I will,” he said, “this day know my fate! what is all the world to him who loses his heart's life—the only being in all the world who could render that world a paradise to him?”

With feelings such as these words indicate, he approached the astonished fair one; who, on hearing her name pronounced, started in affright.

“Be not alarmed!” he exclaimed, scarcely knowing what he said, “’tis I—Walter Lerue!”

Upon seeing who it was, Anne's surprise at his sudden appearance instantly vanished, and she welcomed him again to the heath.

So different to his own was her manner, and so at variance with that which he had expected and hoped his unlooked-for presence would have caused, that he stood for a time perfectly bewildered. The feeling which Lerue experienced at this moment was one not at all uncommon to those of excitable temperament; they work upon their own imaginations, until they cannot comprehend how it is that others can look upon the same objects as they do, with eyes less magnifying than their own.

Lerue had been for whole days thinking of nothing else—for whole nights dreaming of nothing else, but the lovely Anne; and, it seemed to him, that it was not at all unnatural, that she, in like manner, might have been employing her whole thoughts upon him. Observing the little excitement his presence had caused, he felt, that to declare his passion then, would be absurd, for few things make a man more ridiculous than evincing violent passion to one who is passionless; so, swallowing his disappointment, he entered into the usual style of inquiries, concerning her health, then of her recovery from the sudden illness she had had when last he had seen her, and such like topics: but still, the opportunity appeared so glorious, the spot so romantic, for such a disclosure—their being alone, too, was a chance that might never occur again—all these thoughts so perplexed him, that when Anne asked him his opinion of her artistic effort, he looked at her lovely face instead of the picture, and exclaimed—“Perfect!”

“But,” said Anne, “you have not yet seen it.”

This observation at once brought Lerue down from the clouds to earth. Although very confused he did manage to cast an eye, first at the cross, then at the sketch, and again he exclaimed—“Perfect!”

This time Anne felt far more flattered at the word *perfect*, than she had before; and, hearing her work praised by one whom she regarded as a consummate judge, she began to think it did possess some little merit. As she was turning it, first one way, then another, then touching it here, and then there, she was made to start up in real affright, by having her hand seized suddenly, and, at the same instant, finding Walter Lerue on his knee before her. But her alarm did not end here, for, ere Lerue could utter a word, or Anne demand the meaning of such strange conduct, they were, for a moment, both paralyzed at hearing a most piercing shriek. Lerue drawing his dagger, rushed from the spot, and Anne would have followed, but her limbs sank beneath her, and she was fain to support herself against one of the ruined columns.

In a few minutes Lerue returned from his fruitless search: no one could he discover, although they felt convinced it was a human voice they had heard. It was now hopeless for Lerue to renew his attempt to disclose his passion; all Anne's anxiety was to return home.

As they left the ruins, and were winding their way round a portion of them, a sound struck upon their ears, resembling a deep-drawn sigh; they hastened to the spot whence it came, and there, behind some shrubs and fragments of the chapel lay the fainting form of the poor Lilly of the Inn.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Anne, flying to succour her she had always so much loved.

Lerue stood astounded, and felt as though he would have wished the earth to open and swallow him. In a moment, the whole truth had flashed upon his mind. The ruined chapel was a favourite spot with him—Lillia knew it was so—and the poor child had gone there, day after day, since his departure, to deepen her affection for him, by pondering over every word and look he had ever bestowed upon her. She had always remained there until the hour when the letter-carrier should have arrived at the ferry—then she would hasten home, hoping the expected letter had arrived; but, although disappointed in those hopes, she still hoped on, and was happily building up all sorts of fairy castles in the air, as she approached the loved ruins, and was just picturing the bliss her future life would know—when she beheld her soul's idol kneeling at another's feet: she uttered one shriek, and fell senseless.

Never had Lerue felt such a bitter pang, as he did upon beholding Lillia lying as it were in death. The cottage being nearer than her home, Anne implored Lerue to bear her thither. This had been an easy task in any other case, for her slight fairy-like form was in his arms but as a feather, but there was a load upon his heart far heavier than the form he pressed against it, which weighed him to the earth.

They were but a very short time reaching the cottage, and Lerue having given his still unconscious burden into the care of Alyce, hastened away to the Ferry, to remove any alarm Lillia's absence might create.

He felt greatly relieved to find that her father was in London, and would not return for some time; so going to the room he had recently occupied, for the purpose of writing the letter he had before intended to have written, his heart quite ached at observing, that not one single thing there belonging to him, but had some mark about it of Lillia's childish care—of her devoted love. A rough sketch he had done, to please her,

of himself, she had adorned with flowers, and had placed it on the chair he had mostly occupied ; before it stood another seat, and upon this he found her lute.

He now determined upon the course he would pursue, and taking another seat—for he felt that it would be like sacrilege to remove those slight, but, as his mind was now wrought upon, touching evidences of pure affection—he commenced his painful task.

CHAPTER XXV.

But so befel, this merchant on a day,
Shaped him to maken ready his aray,
Toward the town of Bruges, for to fare,
To buyen there a portion of ware.

CHAUCER.

FROM the very hour the merchant had set sail for the Low Countries, the wind had proved so contrary, that although several days had elapsed since leaving the river, the vessel had made no further way than the North Foreland. At every hour, the sea rose higher and higher ; the wind howled fiercer and fiercer ; and the heavy swell that now rolled in resistlessly from the Northern seas, began to speak but too plainly of coming dangers—dangers made doubly to be dreaded, from the very imperfect knowledge the English then possessed of nautical affairs. It was at the commencement of Henry the Eighth's reign, that serious attention was first bestowed by government upon the navy ; but to the small beginnings made by him, may be ascribed our present mighty power on the main : to him we owe the "*The Trinity House*," with its light-houses and beacons ; but the number at this time was so small, that the dangers of the sea had been but little reduced by them ; and so impossible did the captain of the merchant's vessel find the task of beating round the North Foreland (which then reached much further into the sea than at present) unaided, that he cast anchor, and put up signals for a pilot to come from land.

Many and weary were the hours they remained unheeded ; and the gathering storm was now so rapidly increasing, that it seemed next to impossible that any boat would venture to bring them aid. The rain poured down in torrents, the wind screamed, not whistled, through the rigging ; still they watched, anxiously straining their sight towards the land, which, as the gloom of evening approached, shewed like some black undefined monster, defying the lashing waves.

At last, to their great joy, a boat did near them ; but many were the fruitless attempts it made to get to windward, which having at last accomplished, it came with a dreadful crash against the ship's side, but by Herculean efforts the four men held her to, until the pilot, climbing the side of the larger vessel, told the others to come aboard, and leave the boat to its fate, for if they attempted again to reach the shore, not one would be alive on the morrow. But the youngest one there, who seemed to have most command, declared " He'd see his Bess that night, or never see her more."

"A lubberly fool!" exclaimed the pilot, with a dreadful oath; "he was only married this morning, and if he find not a damp bed to-night, I know nought of 'wind or weather!'"

The four men had succeeded in dragging their boat, along the side, to the stern of the ship, round which it darted, and was once more seen tossing upon the open waves.

The pilot never took his eyes from off the boat, and when it was nearly lost to sight, he almost screamed out—"By Heaven, she's gone!"

His words were true: a sea struck her, and she vanished like a shot.

The merchant would have had at least one effort made to save the drowning wretches; but the pilot laughed at the idea.—"We shall have enough to do," said the pilot, "to keep our own heads above water. Here we must remain till daylight, if the storm, which is as yet but in its infancy, will allow us. Had it not been so thundering dark as it is, we'd about ship, and run for the Medway; but the sands along this coast will beat any pilot that ever was born, or ever will be—that is, in a dark night. Give me daylight, and the sands be d——d! say I."

Every precaution that could be taken, to prevent their being driven from their present secure anchorage, was resorted to. Another anchor was cast into the sea, and to this, a stouter cable than that to the first, was made secure. Every inch of canvass was reefed closely up, or removed entirely; all was, under the pilot's orders, made, what sailors call, "snug" for the night: but, pray Heaven, we may never pass such a night in such a snuggery! Although it was winter, there had been more than one dreadful peal of thunder, that seemed to shake the bark in every beam. The merchant remained on deck the whole night; and, oh! how he more than once thought upon his happy cottage on the leath, and wondered what his dear Alyce and his darling child were then doing, and whether they were alarmed for his safety in that dreadful storm. But from this anxiety he relieved his mind, by feeling assured, that having been away so many days, they would believe him already safe in the land he sought.

The wind was blowing dead ahead up channel. It was now midnight; nothing could be seen around, excepting close by the ship, and there all was white and foaming.

"See, see!" said the pilot, "is not that a light bearing down from the nor-east? It is a signal of distress; but our distress is pretty nearly as great as theirs; only we have not yet slipped our cables, nor lost our anchors, which is their case, I'd swear; or else their commander's drunk: see how she flies along!"

Through the darkness, the merchant and his crew could clearly see, in consequence of the fires lighted on board the distant vessel, as a last hope to bring them aid, that it was a vessel about their own tonnage, and, as the pilot guessed, no doubt had lost their anchors, and unshipped their rudder; for as she passed them, there was evidently no command over her, by those on board. She was soon lost to sight; and all was dark and dreary as before. A new peril now attacked the merchant's ship; the tide having turned, the bark began to veer round, and as it did so, received some awful seas against her sides.

"If a third sea had struck us then," said the pilot, "as quickly as

the second did the first, we should not have troubled our friends by calling upon them to-morrow!"

Bang—bang—went sea after sea against the ship; one passed entirely over her, but no one was swept away.

"It's gone!" exclaimed the pilot, as one of their cables snapped like a thread; "and there goes the other!" he continued, as in like manner the second broke. "Now then, a stout hand to the helm, and a stout faith in God, alone can save us!" He flew to the stern of the vessel, and, aided by one of the strongest seamen aboard, attempted to give the safest direction he could guess at, to the flying vessel.

As if Heaven had heard the rough, but sincere command, to place "a stout faith in God," the wind, as if by a miracle, began to abate. With what fervency did the merchant now offer up thanksgivings. Not that the danger was over, but that he felt that hope might once more look around, though still affrighted.

"I think the morning will never break," said the pilot, "and if we can't distinguish between the surge of these waves, and the breakers on the sands, we shall require spectacles, I can tell you, that can look through a pitch barrel, before we shall be able to find our way through the danger!"

Although prodigiously rough, yet, as the wind began in a degree to die away, the waves too seemed more inclined to be at peace.

"Egad, the clouds are breaking!" said the pilot, as he looked up into the face of Heaven, which was still scowling blackly upon the angry billows; "if they should quarrel, and fly asunder in half an hour, we may yet get light enough from the moon, that should be behind them!"

Anxiously did the merchant watch every movement of the dense masses, that now began to roll majestically along the skies; and, as for one moment, a spot of light shot between the clouds, a sudden hope seemed to fill every breast, and all exclaimed "there! there!" But the spirit of hope again closed her eyes, and all was once more dark upon the waters.

Perhaps nothing tended so much to raise the sinking spirits of all aboard, as suddenly to hear the pilot humming to himself, a bit of a well-known ditty. It is astonishing, how much may be done by a well-timed apparent confidence in one's self, when we would gain the confidence of those about us.

The heavens were certainly less dark, though apparently not less stormy; and now in quicker succession, and of longer duration, came patches of pale light, shewing faintly through the thinner clouds. As they approached nearer and nearer to the dread sands, the moon in pity struggled hard to pass between the clouds, and did at last succeed sufficiently to shew, by the breakers, where those sands lay; and as the tide had fallen rapidly, in many places their treacherous heads were high above the surging waters.

"She's there!" said the pilot, pointing towards some shapeless black masses, that were already half embedded in the sands, "she's there, sure enough! that is, as much as is left of her. I thought when we saw her scudding along, she would be stopped in her mad-headed course by that sand-trap. After the next tide has risen and fallen, you'll not see

a beam of her remaining; those sands are devils; they first destroy all that comes near them, and then they dig huge graves for their victims, and bury 'em outright."

So near had they approached to the shore at one point, that they could distinctly hear the tolling of a solemn-sounding bell; this they felt was being rung for the purpose of dispelling the storm; for, as we have before noticed, bells were supposed, after having been baptized, to possess that wondrous power. On hearing this, many a rough hand was making the sign of the cross, and many a vow was being offered up to Heaven, that if they were but permitted again to reach their homes in safety, how amended should be their lives. But few, we fear, remembered those vows, save, perhaps, the merchant, who did, in after times, fulfil to the letter, all he then promised in that hour of peril.

So much had the light increased, that now the pilot felt sure that they should reach the mouth of the Medway in safety, and there they would remain until the weather should change, and allow them, once more to "bout ship," and sail for their destined port; but the merchant's dangers were not yet over; for, as they continued their course, between the shore and the sand-banks, something struck against their vessel, which, as it floated past, proved to be the shattered remains of a boat. On seeing this, the pilot declared, that he believed every soul aboard the vessel that had been wrecked, must have perished; for, in all likelihood, that boat had been used as their last hope, which, having failed them, they had all gone down.

The merchant, who had been throughout the storm one of the most watchful, and had, more than once, been of service by that watchfulness, was now attentively looking upon the sand-bank, and judging by the breakers, whether they were approaching too near the shoals, suddenly exclaimed—"By Heavens! there is something moving on the sands—look there, there!"

All hands ran to the side of the vessel where the merchant stood, and through the hazy atmosphere distinguished, although but very imperfectly, what they believed to be some wretched human beings, awaiting the rising of the tide to bring them that death, from which, for a short space, these sands had rescued them.

The pilot declared it would be madness to attempt to offer them succour; but the merchant first entreated, then commanded, that, however hopeless the attempt, it should be made.

"Well," said the pilot, "if your humanity is so fool-hardy, perhaps you'll be the first to jump into the boat when it is lowered, that is, if it isn't swamped before you get over the ship's side. All I know is that I would be the last."

"I will be the first!" exclaimed the merchant, "for I ask no man to meet a danger I fear to meet myself: will any follow me to the trial?"

For an instant, all hands hung back; but it was but for an instant, when one and all swore they'd follow the merchant, if he led them to the very devil himself. The boat was lowered with the merchant, and three of the stoutest hands aboard. She touched the waves—it was a fearful moment: in another instant she was tossing upon their white crests, and was right upon her course towards the bank.

While the merchant was thus surrounded by the perils of the storm, upon the sea, Osborne was encountering perils scarcely less formidable, upon Old London Bridge: so tremendous had been the power of the winds, that more than one dwelling was unroofed, windows were blown in, and in one instance, an entire house was carried from the Bridge, into the raging flood; three tides ebbcd and flowed within nine hours; or, an effect, similar to the rising and falling of the tide, had been produced by the power of the wind; but, as in olden times everything at all strange was attributed to miracles, this circumstance was accordingly attributed to supernatural power, as a warning to the good folks of the Bridge, that some dire calamity was about to visit the kingdom.

Osborne, and the Bridge-shooter, had been busily engaged for hours, strengthening, as well as they could, the weaker parts of the dwelling, such as the casements, and the doors that opened upon the balconies. Many persons were severely wounded by the falling of sign-boards.

Poor Silkworm, and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, appeared doomed to be cast into awkward and ridiculous situations, for just as they were congratulating themselves upon being so snug and warm in their little garret, a tremendous gust of wind rushed past with such resistless power, that it carried away the whole front of the gable end of their dwelling, leaving them all at once exposed to the pelting of the pitiless storm, and in a position not unfattended with real danger.

"It is an awful night," said Osborne, addressing the Bridge-shooter; "many a poor soul will find a watery grave before the morning: how fortunate for our good master, that he left the river when he did, or I should have trembled for his safety; but he must, long ere this have reached the end of his voyage; the Dutch coast is an awkward place in such weather as this, and——Heavens!" he exclaimed, starting up, "that crash——surely, the whole Bridge is giving way!" They hurried down to ascertain the cause of the fearful noise they had heard. They found the people on the Bridge in great consternation; the house, which we mentioned above, had at that moment given way from the one opposite to which it had been bound by strong beams, crossing from roof to roof, and had fallen over into the river. Fortunately, those who had dwelt in it, upon hearing a violent cracking of the timbers, had run out, and thus had saved their lives.

The building on the opposite side, was rendered, by the loss of its former support, most perilous; every means were at once resorted to, to tie it with ropes and chains, to those buildings of more substantial construction, which stood near; props were being applied, and indeed every precaution was taken, that such an unlooked for disaster rendered possible.

It was just after this accident, that the wind suddenly became less violent, and people began to hope that they might possibly pass the rest of the night in their beds. The hurricane which had thrown the house from the Bridge into the flood, was the same that had snapped the cables of the merchant's ship, and placed him and the crew in such imminent peril. It must have been, too, exactly at the moment when the merchant had gone to hazard his own life, in attempting to rescue from death, the poor



No unexpected visit

"He lives!" said the stranger; "and it is to tell you that he lives, and put you on your guard, that I am here!"

"Why to put me on my guard?" said Edward; "I never wronged him; and though he be, I know, of a violent and unforgiving temper, I fear him not—why should I?"

"Because," said the stranger, "you befriended those whom he hated, and wished dead! I mean a blind girl called Eoline, and the Cripple who married her!"

"Know you aught of them?" exclaimed Edward, anxiously. "It is so long since I have received any tidings, that I feared me some mischance had befallen them!"

"They are well!" said the stranger; "but Horton believes the girl is in the other world; and as the times have changed since he fled this land, he intends to return to England, and lay claim to all that should be hers."

"You are jesting," said Edward, with an incredulous smile, "you are jesting surely! Why, Eoline was a poor blind creature kept on charity by the good sisters, the Poor Clares, of the Minories."

"I know nothing about who, or what she was, or is, or may be; all I do know, is what I was told to repeat to you; and to place in your hands a charm!"

"A charm!" exclaimed the Bridge-shooter, thinking of the witch, his mother.

"Yes, starrer!" said the man, "a charm, and one so powerful, that it must not be used until the last extremity, when—" and the stranger's eye sparkled, as he said with a voice of exultation—"when, though he be as high, in his own conceit, above all earthly power to harm him, as the skies are above the powers of earth, yet shall it bring him down, down to your feet, as though his hamstrings had been shot asunder: when the hour shall come, that all other hope be lost, and he seem resistless, take from your breast this charm; it is a talisman sent from the mouldering dead, to turn his blood to ice—and will!" So powerfully did the stranger utter this speech, and with such apparent belief in the mystic talisman he was about to reveal, that, in spite of themselves, both the Bridge-shooter and Edward became quite excited; the latter exclaimed—"Where, where is this potent charm?"

"'Tis here!" shouted the stranger, at the same time dashing his hand loudly upon the table; he raised it—and there lay the blood-stained knife, with which Horton had murdered Sir Filbut in the wood.

"What means that rusted knife?" enquired Osborne, who, not knowing the use it had once been put to, saw in it, but little likely to effect such wonders, as it was promised to perform.

"No matter now!" replied the other; "but guard it well; keep it from every eye but those that now behold it, at least until the time, the proper time shall come to make all sure—farewell!"

"Stay!" exclaimed Edward; "do not depart without being more explicit; you speak of danger to be guarded against, but say not what that danger is—you speak in riddles—who, and what are you?"

"A man without a name!" replied the stranger, "and to you, intend to remain such; we may, or we may not meet again: guard well that

charm; use it as I have told you; when 't be necessary that you should know more, the Witch of Houndsditch will reveal it."

"The Witch of Houndsditch!" exclaimed the Bridge-shooter; "why, that's my mother; but she an't a witch, nor ever was, nor ever will be!"

"Peace, fool," said the stranger, "and shew me the door!" Then turning towards Edward, he said—"A silent tongue makes a wise head; open thine eyes, but close thy lips; do as I have commanded, and you will snare a villain, and befriend your friends—farewell!"

The stranger waited not for further parley, but hurrying down the dark stairs, was soon heard slamming the outer door.

"Follow him!" exclaimed Edward, the moment they heard the door close, "follow him, but do not let him see that you are watching; mark well where he goes!"

The Bridge-shooter, delighted at the task, waited not a moment, but rushing down, was out of the house, almost as soon as the stranger himself. Although scarcely a moment had elapsed, no one could he discover near the place: the neighbours, since the abating of the storm, had gained courage to re-enter their houses, no longer fearing theirs would share the fate of the lantern-maker's; the Bridge was completely deserted, and save the roaring of the waters, and the melancholy wailings of the wind, no sound could be heard. The Bridge-shooter listened for a footfall, to direct him the way the stranger might have taken, but he listened in vain.

"Well," said the Bridge-shooter, "if we are not bewitched, no mortals ever were, that I'll swear; the man, or devil, or whatever he was, must have flown into the air, or sunk through the stones of the Bridge, for I'll defy him to have vanished thus suddenly, by any more common means." Having quite made up his mind, that the stranger was some fiend in disguise, he felt it would be useless to continue the search further, so hastened in doors again, and related his ill success to Edward, who, upon hearing of the mysterious disappearance of the stranger, said—"It has often struck me, that I must have been born under the influence of some star of mystery; nothing ever occurs to me as to others; I always have wished, and wish so still, to pass my life in quietude, and unpretending obscurity; but do what I will, I cannot escape from falling into situations the most mysterious, the most exaggerated; and now, it appears, that in spite of myself, I am to be dragged into some more mysterious affair than any yet; but to what end, or why I am thus selected, Heaven only knows! That knife too——"

"Are you sure it is a knife?" said the Bridge-shooter, seizing Edward's arm, to prevent him from touching it, "are you sure it is? It certainly looks like a knife, and one of not the newest fashion either. Shall I throw it into water? if it is be-deviled 'twill swim if an honest knife 'twill sink: that's the way mother sometimes tries these charmed things."

"Why, William," said Osborne, smiling, "you are surely growing as superstitious as the good dame, your mother, herself: be-deviled! nonsense—I fear not to touch it!" saying which, he took up the knife; "it's but a common thing—an apprentice's old-fashioned dagger-knife,

such as I used formerly to carry. These marks are not of rust," and he looked closer at the blade; "they are more like old stains of blood!"

"Blood!" exclaimed the Bridge-shooter, poking his nose over the knife; "and see," he continued, "the point has been broken off—and hang me if that pattern running down the blade isn't—well, that would be mysterious indeed!"

"What would he mysterious?" enquired Edward quickly, for he saw, by William's manner, that his mind was fraught with some odd notion.

"Oh, nothing!" said the other, "only if it should be—wait a moment, wait a moment—only you just wait a moment!"

The Bridge-shooter seized a lamp, and Edward instantly heard him lumbering and tumbling up the stairs, to the very top of the house; in another minute he was heard tumbling down again, and as he hurried into the room he exclaimed—"It is, I'll swear it is, before I try it! See here, master Edward, see here!" and he held up the broken piece of the blade, against which Osborne, it may be remembered, had cut his foot, and which the Bridge-shooter had kept ever since, for the purpose of scratching out blots, or errors he made when writing; he placed it at the end of the knife, and to Edward's astonishment, it fitted so exactly, that it was not possible to doubt the two parts having formerly been one.

"Here's another mystery," observed Osborne, "and one that I think will baffle all our ingenuity to fathom. How little did I think, when I cut my foot with that piece of the blade, that, years after, the remaining part would come thus strangely into my possession—and why? this to me seems the most mysterious of all the mysteries that have yet surrounded me!"

"I am not quite sure," replied the Bridge-shooter, "that this is so mysterious as you think; in the first place, I have made up my mind that the strange being who has just left us, notwithstanding his vanishing so suddenly, is no wizard, but flesh and blood like ourselves. Do you remember his asking me what I was staring at? I'll tell you why I stared. I dare say it never struck you as strange, that he should say—'Oh, it's you, young gentleman!'—now it did me, for those were the words, and the voice was the same, we heard beneath the Black Arch of the Clink: the man of the arch, and the man of the knife are one, depend upon it!"

"But granting this to be as you say, we have arrived, thereby, no nearer to a solution of this strange occurrence!"

"Not much, to be sure!" replied the Bridge-shooter; "but still every little is something; and when we put this and that together, we may guess pretty easily whose knife that was: you found this piece sticking in the floor of Horton's old room; the strange man tells you that the other part possesses a charm, to bring Horton to the dust; you know it to be such as 'prentices always carry; so to make a long story short, that was Horton's: how it came into the stranger's hands, or why he has placed it in yours, for the present we cannot know; but my firm belief is—" and as the Bridge-shooter said this, he lowered his voice, and cast an anxious look around the room, as if fearing some other ears might catch the words—"yes, my firm belief is, that with that knife some

dreadful secret act has been perpetrated, and that we are to be the instruments of bringing it to light."

"No, no!" exclaimed Edward, slightly shuddering; "the horrid suspicion that has crossed your mind, cannot be founded on truth. Horton, I know, was ever vindictive, ever cruel, and cared not whom he wronged to gratify his passions, or work out his revenge, but not to the extent your words imply—you hint at murder!"

"In what other way can that knife possess so monstrous a power over him? But, be it as it may, guard well that blood-stained blade, for blood those stains are, I feel certain. In the morning I'll away to my old mother, the Witch of Houndsditch, as the stranger called her, for you remember he told us, what further was to be learnt, would be through her; she'll make a rignmarole sort of story, and will tell me a vast deal more than the truth, though I'll give the old soul the credit of believing all she does say is true; I'll manage as well as I can to ferret out something."

When the Bridge-shooter reached his mother's cottage, he approached the casement to tap at it, as was his usual custom every morning, and then to give her a kindly nod, before he entered the cottage door; but he now checked his hand, for he fancied he saw a figure standing in the room, resembling the stranger of the night before; he stepped cautiously past the window, and approaching the door on tiptoe, intending to surprise the stranger, and, in his own mind determined, now it was daylight, and all his superstitious fears having vanished, to come to an open explanation, and not let him again give him the slip, he raised the latch without a sound, and darting in, became more amazed than ever, for not a soul, but his old bed-ridden mother, was in the room.

"Where's the stranger?" he exclaimed, looking round the apartment, as if he still imagined he might be hidden under one of the chairs, or some such impossible place.

"What stranger, boy?" said the old woman, who was evidently agitated; "what stranger do you enquire after? But methinks it had been but dutiful of a son, to have enquired after his infirm old mother, before thinking of strangers!"

"Forgive me, mother," said William; "but before I ask after aught else, I will know who and what that man is who was here but now!" As he said this, he attempted to open the door leading to a sort of kitchen, it was locked—"Oh, oh," said he, "he's here, is he!" then running to the back of the house, was equally unfortunate in his search, for no trace of the stranger could he discover. "I'll swear I saw him standing here!" he said, as he again entered the room. "Come, mother, don't have your witchery nonsense with me. Who was it? and how has he eluded me?"

"He!—who?" enquired the old dame; "those that I have seen, you could not see; and those that I have heard, even the stormy winds would have prevented you from hearing; but I see with other eyes, and hear with other ears than mortals do. He has been with me again this night!"

"Whom mean you?" enquired her son, now hoping he had fallen upon the right scent.

"The murdered knight!" replied the old woman; "you'll hear more of

him anon ; you'll hear more of him anon ; and when you do, remember well that I have told you this !”

“ But you've told me this old story so often, and nothing has come of it yet, that I'm getting tired of the murdered knight, and all connected with him. Why won't you tell me concerning what I want to know—who was it with you not five minutes ago ?”

“ One of the many that have been with me in the night !”

“ I'shaw !” said the Bridge-shooter, “ but this is morning, and rather late in the morning too—far too late for spirits to be flitting about. But I see you won't speak upon the subject, and as that is the only subject I wish to be informed on, I'll leave you, and seek my information elsewhere.”

“ You'll find it nowhere else,” replied his mother ; “ and to show you, ungrateful, doubting boy, that I can read events to come, know that you and Edward Osborne must hasten to the cottage on the Heath ; you will there find one you little dream of !”

“ Not the murdered knight ?” said William, smiling ironically ; “ and it can't be Flora, for I'm always dreaming of her—who can it be ?”

“ You would believe me as little were I to tell you, as you do now,” said the mother, “ so I will save my breath ; but remember, that if Edward would serve those he loves, he will be at the Heath this night. Oh, I could tell you a thousand things, but what would be the use of speaking to a block. You will sleep in a strange bed this night !”

“ I say, mother, that's uncommonly old. I suppose next you'll tell me I shall marry a fair girl.”

“ And so you will !” replied the old woman.

“ That I shall,” said William, “ if I marry at all, for Flora's fair, and I swear I'll never marry any one else. How many children shall we have, eh, mother—seven girls, and seven boys ?”

The old woman made no reply, but gave her son a look of withering contempt ; and waving her hand, implied that he might leave her.

“ Gad zooks !” exclaimed the Bridge-shooter, “ why, I say, mother, where's your spirit ?”

“ My spirit !”

“ Yes,” said he, “ your old cat—where is it ?”

“ Gone to seek for your brains,” said the old dame, quite crossly, “ gone to seek for your brains ; and if she stay until she find them, I shall never live to see her again !”

“ Gad, mother, that's a good slap ; but I deserve it ; so give us a kiss, and your blessing ; and to show you how implicitly I believe in all you say, I'll get Edward to go with me to the Heath this very night. I don't think it will take much trouble to tempt him ; for, some how or another, for the last few days, he has been doing nothing else but talk about the Heath, and those upon it ; and seems to be ever seeking for some excuse for going there : but the merchant being away, you know——”

“ No matter,” replied the old woman ; “ I'll take all blame, if my words prove unsooth. But he and you are expected this night ; and let not Edward slight the summons I now send him to be there.”

When the Bridge-shooter returned, he found Osborne sitting near a

desk, with his head leaning against his hand, his eyes turned up towards the heavens—in fact, he was sitting as authors are supposed to sit, in moments of inspiration. The noise of William's entrance startled Edward, and he hurriedly concealed two or three little scraps of paper. The Bridge-shooter had more than once before, although not until lately, noticed a like circumstance, yet never dreamt the cause.

"Well, William," said young Osborne, putting on that studied indifference which people mostly do when they are surprised in doing something they feel slightly ashamed of; "well, what says the Witch of Houndsditch, eh? Has she solved the difficulties of our surmises?"

"Not one," was the Bridge-shooter's reply, "but has added new surmises to our old ones; for can you—I can't, for the life of me—surmise why we two should be expected at the Heath, and on this very night too?"

"At the Heath!" ejaculated Edward, with great eagerness; "and who says we are expected there?"

"Oh, nobody very particular," replied William, "only old mother: but as I promised to deliver her message, why, I suppose I must. She says that if you would serve those you love, you will be at the Heath to-night. But I suppose you won't go."

"Not go!" exclaimed Edward, starting up; "not go, if I can be of service to her—that is to those I love; and whom do I love but those on the Heath? Your mother has been too often right for me to neglect her warnings now."

"I can't say much for her being very often right—I've known her a plaguy deal oftener wrong: but as she sometimes guesses within a mile of the truth, perhaps she does so now, and as far as I'm concerned, a row, or a ride to Putney, would suit my longings vastly, for Flora has returned, no doubt, by this."

"Yes, William, we'll away at once; if a service is to be performed, the sooner it be done the better; a quick favour is a double favour; besides, I myself have for some days past—yes, for several days, had strange forebodings concerning the cottage on the Heath; an inward sort of feeling that seemed to impel me to hasten thither, and see that all was well. Heaven send it be so!"

As soon as the affairs of the merchant's shop could be put into sure train, that their absence might cause no disarrangement of the business, the two mounted their horses, and starting at a good round pace, were soon far from London.

As they journeyed on, the Bridge-shooter, after a very long silence, startled Edward, by saying—"Master Edward, were you ever in love?"

"In love!" exclaimed Osborne, as though such a thought had never once crossed his mind before, "in love! do you think I'm a fool?"

"I think any man's a fool that is not; it's the greatest blessing of my life; if you were but once to taste the sweets of it, you'd find your appetite increase with every morsel you swallowed; it's a perfect paradise; sometimes I could cut my throat with jealousy; at another time I could drown myself in despair!"

"And these are the comforts you would recommend to poor me, eh?—

No, no," said Edward ; "no doubt that jealousy is a very keen blade ; but I have no wish to cut my throat with it ; nor to drown myself in the flood of despair."

"Nor have I, *really*," said William, "for the things themselves are unpleasant enough, no doubt ; but then the delight is at being prevented by her you love ; and it is really astonishing to see how exactly they know the very moment to rush in and save you. Then comes the sobbing, and the crying, and the forgiving, and the making it up, and swearing that you'll never quarrel again, and then quarrelling again ten minutes afterwards. Oh, it's wonderful ! Why don't you fall in love ?"

"Because," replied Edward, "I have never seen any one worth the trouble ; or——" he checked himself, "or, if I had, would think me worth the loving."

"You've never tried," said the Bridge-shooter.

"Nor ever mean," rejoined Edward ; "for I am certain that were I silly enough to place my affections upon any one, I should do so upon the only being on earth that could never be mine. Heigho !"

"Why, that 'heigho's' exactly like a lover's sigh," said William ; "I know all the different sorts of sighs now ; that was a young one, just such as I used to give before Flora owned that she liked me."

"But why," enquired Osborne, "why have you led the conversation into this unusual vein ? I think you have never talked to me thus before."

"No," replied the other, "but we've often wanted to. I say *we*, for I mean Flora and I ; bless you, Master Edward, we've a hundred and a hundred times talked about you ; and if you won't be offended, I'll tell you what we've said."

Osborne could not help smiling at the earnestness with which the Bridge-shooter uttered these words, so the latter taking the smile for consent, went on.—"Well then, I have often and often said to Flora, what a pity it was, that Master Edward would never see what a charming creature young Mistress Anne was ; and then Flora would say to me—'And it's quite as great a pity, that sweet Mistress Anne can't see what a charming young man Master Edward is ;'—upon my life, she says you are a charming young man ; and would you believe it, I have never once been jealous when she has said so."

"I would not interrupt you, William," rejoined Edward, "until you had finished your absurd speech ; for I knew it was kindly meant ; but could you or Flora ever think me so weak, so mad—yes, mad, as to look upon my master's daughter with any eyes but those of a brother ? Is it likely that he, now growing into one of the greatest, the wealthiest merchants, of this, the most wealthy city of the world, would give his child to his apprentice ? or that she, the daughter of such a man, could ever find in that apprentice, worth to make her abandon all her hopes of greatness ? Master Hewet, good as he is, is still as proud as he is good, and will no doubt follow the fashion of the times, and wed his rich daughter to some poor lord. It is the way with most of our great citizens nowadays ; then why should he act differently to them ? Yes, yes, depend upon it, Anne, will one day become the wife of some worthless lordling !" He pronounced the word *worthless* very bitterly ; and then they rode on for

some time in silence. Edward, who had evidently been communing with himself further upon the same theme, said suddenly, as though the Bridge-shooter had been fully aware of what had been passing in his mind—"It is to warn her upon this subject, I am so anxious to visit the Heath. This young artist, this Lerue, of whom I can learn nothing in town, seems by her letter to be a likely swain, and should she fatally become attached to him, her misery would be certain, for her father could never consent to such a match as that; and thus would her future hopes be blighted for ever: but I will warn her."

"If you would take my advice, Master Edward," said the Bridge-shooter, "you'll do no such thing."

"No!" exclaimed Edward Osborne in surprise; "and why not, I pray?"

"Because," replied the other, "it is a well-known fact in natural history—and I have heard that no exception to the rule has yet been discovered—that when you want a girl to do anything, always advise her to the contrary, and she's sure to do it. You see, young women are born with very strong notions of *justice*; so that the moment a young man is traduced, up pops their justice, with magnifying glasses upon his nose, and begins to search about, to find out every little bit of good there may be in him. Now, as everybody has some good, if we will but look for it—and as they look for nothing else—why, they soon find what they think enough to upset the truth of all your warnings; and thus, you see, you have led to your own defeat. No, no; when you do not wish people to care for each other, leave them alone. Why is Cupid always drawn with a bow and arrow? Why, to show that he delights in opposition, and glories in wounding those who attempt to resist him. Had Anne and you been told that on no account must you love each other, hang me if I don't think you would have been married by this time!"

Osborne could not help feeling there was some little truth in the Bridge-shooter's remarks upon the perversity of human nature, for he inwardly acknowledged that ever since he had told himself he must *not* think of Anne, he had thought of nothing else. His mind now took so sad a turn, yet still bearing upon the same forbidden point, that they passed over more than a mile without exchanging another word.

It is quite extraordinary to observe how easily, at times, the most determined resolution may be turned aside by a mere chance word, a look, or even a stifled sigh; here was poor Osborne—who had started for the Cottage of the Heath, not so much on account of the witch's summons, as on that of a previously-formed resolution to annihilate at once every hope that, he felt sure, Lerue was entertaining towards the lovely Anne: yes, and to do it too, by the eloquence of his forewarning—the simple remark of the Bridge-shooter, had thrown a doubt into his mind, regarding the wisdom of such a step, which doubt he found very difficult to overcome. He worried himself greatly upon this question, and at last determined, which was, taking all the circumstances into consideration, the wisest plan to pursue, that he would first reconnoitre the enemy's lines, before he made up his mind as to the mode of attack. It

was towards nightfall when they arrived at the Cottage; but the strange incidents that there took place we must reserve for a future chapter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

My truth will I hold to thee, my brother,
As I have sworn, and each of us to other,
For to be true brethren in this case,
And both we go abouten our purchāse.

CHAUCER.

AFTER sitting for some time, with pen in hand, Lerue started up, as if a sudden determination had seized upon his mind; and pacing backwards and forwards several times, he exclaimed—"Yes, that will be some slight reparation—would to Heaven it could be more complete—but that is impossible! It is ever useless to sigh for what we know sighs never can obtain; therefore, let me do the little good I am still able to achieve, light as it will weigh against the heavy wrongs my silly vanity has caused me to heap upon that poor child. Will she disclose to Anne her secret? Heaven forbid! Yet why should I say that? Would it not be better, were this infatuation of mine at once destroyed by any means? I know my own weakness; and while there be a chance of gaining a smile from the sweet eyes of the Beauty of the Heath, I shall never have courage to withstand the tempting lure. I'm a fool—in every way a fool! Why am I still here? What is the end I would attain?—the hand of Dame Allen's daughter? The thought were madness—and yet to give up the pursuit I feel to be impossible. It is now certain that I must never see poor Lillia again. I would have unloosed the tie between us with a gentler hand, but since fate has torn it thus ruthlessly asunder, so let it be; for it were less cruel now to allow the wound to heal, unaided but by time, than to add new tortures in probing it afresh, merely for the sake of proving our art in causing that wound at length to be less seen."

Lerue, again taking up his pen, wrote to Dame Allen, an excuse for not returning to the cottage, business of importance having called him to London; this he did, hoping that by the time he should again visit the Heath, that Lillia would have so far recovered as to be away from the cottage.

Having dispatched this letter, he ordered a horse to be brought immediately, and at once hurried away to put his newly-formed scheme into execution. What that scheme was, time will develope. When Lerue reached Southwark, he dismounted at the Tabard—the Inn immortalized by Chaucer, a portion of which still exists; and here he left the horse, and then hastened on foot towards the Bridge: feeling somewhat athirst just as he was passing the Cardinal's Hat, he entered, and called for a tankard of ale, seating himself near a window that looked on to the Bridge. His mind being full of his own thoughts, he did not for a time notice who were in the place, nor heed the subject they appeared to be in high dispute upon. He was not long however allowed to remain thus indifferent, for the sharp-nosed little arrow-

maker, placing himself exactly opposite to him, addressed him thus—
 “Now, sir, I appeal to you, who being a stranger, as it were, that is, not one of us, you can have no prejudices either for or against whatever I say, or he says, or the other says—or what anybody says. Now, sir, I appeal to you—is it not a just law, a good law, a righteous law, a glorious law?”

“Before I decide,” said Lerue, “I think it would be as well, as you appear determined to constitute me judge of this worshipful court, that you should first tell me what law you are alluding to?”

“What law!” exclaimed half a dozen at once; “what law, indeed! why, what law can it be, but the new one to put a stop to begging!”

“I wonder,” said the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, “I wonder if it will apply to wives; I hope it will, for my wife is always begging of me to do something; for her, and if once I get her under the new law, won’t I make a slave of her, and wipe off old scores; she has made a slave of me long enough, and——”

“Silence in the court!” roared out Catchemayde; “silence! or how is the judge to hear the case?”

“Yes, friend,” said Lerue, “be silent, all but one, and let him speak quickly, for ‘hours fly, and so must I,’ as the song saith: now to the law.”

“Well then, you know, that is, you will know when I tell you, that vagabonds, and vagrants, and thieves, and beggars, but they are all one—yes, beggars have so awfully increased of late, that our worthy governors have just passed a righteous law to put ‘em down!”

“That will indeed,” observed Lerue, “be a righteous law; for begging speaks of poverty, and to obliterate poverty from any land, would indeed be a righteous act!”

“Oh! but it does not do away with poverty,” observed one of the opposite side; “no, no, it only punishes those, who are already punished enough, I think, by being poor.”

“And in what way does it punish them?” enquired Lerue.

“First, then,” replied the little arrow-maker, who appeared to have studied the new law deeply, “first, then, those who are found loitering about for three days, are to be branded on the breast with a hot iron, and made a slave of to the informer, for three years——”

“No, for two years!” exclaimed half a dozen.

“Well, then let it be two years,” said the other; “but it ought to have been three: perhaps I’m wrong, too, in saying that we may refuse our slaves meat; and that we may make them work, by beating, chaining, or otherwise. That word *otherwise* was a glorious thought, for in fact, it leaves us to interpret it how we like, and make *otherwise* mean anything we please. Secondly, if the slave run away for fourteen days, and is caught, he is to be marked with a hot iron on the forehead, or the ball of the cheek. I say, Catchemayde, mind I don’t catch you; such marking would spoil your beauty, eh? and what would the fishmonger’s wife say then?”

“Mind your own business,” replied the other, “and proceed with the question; for see, our worthy judge is nearly tired of your prosing!”

“Well, then,” continued the arrow-maker, “and having been thus

burnt, he is to be adjudged a slave to his master for ever; and should he then attempt to escape, he is to suffer the death of a felon. Now, I again ask, is that not a just law, a good law, a righteous law, a glorious law?"

"As far as I can understand it," rejoined Lerue, "it appears to me to be a law, that must have been framed by a set of fiends, rather than a body of Christian men!"

"Huzza! huzza!" shouted the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker's opponents; "huzza! the verdict is given! And now, little sharp-nose," said Silkworm, "order in the sack; you're beaten, out-and-out beaten."

"Well," said the little arrow-maker, "I may be beaten, but I never run away, as *some* people did from the Clink: I never turn my back upon any friend!"

"Don't you?" was the reply of Catchemayde, as he winked to those around; "don't you? Well, I never had a friend turn his back so completely upon me, as you did when we were hung up to dry by the Bishop's Birds. Why, man, do what I would, I could not make you face me!"

"Master Catchemayde," replied the other, "there are certain circumstances in all men's lives, that had better be touched upon as lightly as may be; or, may be, the sleeping lion may be aroused; and, may be——"

Here the poor little arrow-maker was interrupted by a general roar of laughter, and Lerue feeling but little interest in their dispute, threw down a piece of money to discharge his reckoning, and was on the point of quitting the place, when he fancied he saw some one in a dark corner of the room, endeavouring to avoid his notice; had the man sat quietly, Lerue would no doubt have passed out without recognising him; but now he at once walked straight to the spot, and exclaimed—"Nino!" The man appeared to be confused at being found in such a place, rose, and in Italian, uttered a few words to Lerue, who replying in the same language, that what he said might not be understood by those around, left the Cardinal's Hat, followed by him whom he had addressed as Nino.

There was one other who also quitted the place, this was Spikely; he had been for a long time before conversing with Nino, who was an Italian Spikely had known abroad, and it was to meet Spikely, and renew their former friendship, that Nino had then visited the Cardinal's Hat. Spikely followed at some distance, but still near enough to perceive by their gesticulations, that angry words were passing between Lerue and his companion. They soon quitted the Bridge, and turning down Swan Lane, the former gave a packet to Nino, who entering a boat at the stairs, departed towards the west; Lerue passing by the Steel Yard, was soon out of sight. Spikely hurried down the stairs, and eyeing the various boats and their rowers, pitched upon the one that appeared to him the most lightly built, and had the strongest waterman aboard: he jumped in, and was soon in the wake of the boat of Nino. When they arrived opposite the Strand, which, at that time was adorned with the magnificent mansions and castles of the nobility, the gardens of which extended to the water side, Spikely saw by the outstretched arm of Nino, that he was pointing to, and was about to land at, the private stairs of one of these

mansions; he ordered his waterman to put out his strength, and thus came alongside the other boat, just as it turned towards the landing place.

Nino, although surprised to see his friend so near, did not appear at all sorry he was there, so the boats coming the one on each side the stairs, the two cronies stepped ashore exactly at the same moment. They entered the beautiful grounds, and after a few words, implying that they would meet again in a few minutes, Spikely made himself comfortable in an alcove that overlooked the river, and Nino hastened towards the castellated mansion.

"So he is to arrive to-day!" said Spikely, speaking to himself; "luck befriends me; I shall have merely to forge my bolts, and already, I perceive, I need not fear finding fools enough to shoot them for me. This Nino, this young Italian, may be turned to good account. I like Italian rogues; there's no mincing matters with them; they hate a man, and the stiletto tells their hate, and that saves bandying angry words, and ruffling one's passions. I have plenty of irons in the fire, so that it will be hard indeed if Horton escape being burnt by some of them. Ha, ha! I long to see Horton's look as I point to the wound in my throat, which he intended to have been my passport to another world! It is odd, that dare-devil as I am, I have succeeded so seldom in obtaining my revenge upon those who have wronged me!"

Here he ceased speaking for a few minutes, and appeared to be making some calculation, for with the forefinger of his right hand, he kept counting on the fingers of his left; and as he did this, he again spoke half aloud. "Yes, Horton, one; Osborne, two; the merchant, three; the Bridge-shooter, four; Brassinjaw, five; the Cripple—no, I have wiped him out of the list; but d——m her, there's my wife—that makes the six. The first and the last shall feel my vengeance deepest; Horton and Nan are *my* debtors; the rest must pay off old scores on my brother's account. The shot I received in the head from Osborne, I could forgive——"

The shot he here alluded to, was that which had caused the deep indenture near the right side of the forehead, we before mentioned, as being found on the head of the stranger, who had visited Edward so mysteriously on the night of the great storm; that stranger was Spikely. How he had been wounded, and had obtained the blood-stained knife, may be thus explained.

On the night Horton had endeavoured to regain the papers he had sewn in the old mattress of his bed, it may be remembered he had drawn out his knife to unrip the sacking, but his horror at looking upon it, so freshly stained by the gore of his victim, had caused him to throw it, as he believed he had done, into the river. In casting it from the window, it had struck against a projection, and had thus been precipitated perpendicularly into the boat where Spikely was waiting, and who perceiving what it was, it struck him at once, that at some future day such a thing might be turned to good account, so carefully concealed the dagger; and it was again to seek it, where he had deposited it for security, that he had met the apprentices under the Black Arch, and had recognised Osborne as their leader. After his first great quarrel with

Horton, he began to think, that could he himself obtain the coveted papers, he might make them not only aid his own fortunes, but act as a powerful engine of revenge; he knew they were still in their old hiding-place; and it was in his attempt to gain admittance by the same window, that had so frequently been used by Horton, that young Osborne had fired upon him; he fell into the boat; fortunately for him at that moment, the rope by which he had fastened the boat, gave way; and the tide being now strong, the bark had darted through the bridge, in the opposite direction, thus preventing Edward from discovering any one beneath.

"Yes," he continued, "that shot I could forgive, but not my brother's death. No, no; that must be paid for early or late; when he has done my work against Horton, then young Master Osborne's own turn may come, but not till then; the same with Hewet, and the like with the Bridge-shooter; they must wait their turns. It is odd, that do what I will, I can gain no information concerning that hell-cat, Nan. She may be dead. Well, if so, 'tis better perhaps. But this new law they talk of, might have worked for me gloriously. If her father had been still alive, and I could have caught him by it, that would have been the way; for, strange to say, though Nan, at times would beat the old devil herself, and act towards him as if in hate, the only way to touch her to the quick, was for others to ill use him. I have often worked her up to madness by the kicks and cuffs I gave to him."

Hearing footsteps near, he rose, thinking, it was Nino approaching, but immediately shrunk back again, and stood motionless. Close to his retreat was a thick hedge, dividing that part of the grounds from the principal walk. So near to the hedge did the persons in the walk pass by, that he could plainly distinguish two voices; the one uttering words that seemed to have been formed in fashion's choicest mould; the other was of a cringing fawning tone, and fell upon Spikely's ear as one to which it had long been familiar.

As the speakers receded, Spikely crept from his concealment, and with stealthy steps followed the sound, endeavouring, through every little opening he found in the thick-set hedge, to discover who the speakers were; he was long disappointed, but at last he came to a part of the verdent barrier, through which he succeeded in obtaining a view of the speakers; the first he recognised as Baron Seymour, the Lord High Admiral of England; the other—could he believe his eyes! he actually rubbed them again and again, as if doubting their truthfulness of vision; so surprised was he, that an involuntary exclamation burst from his lips, and he uttered the name of "Horton!" The two speakers turned instantly at the sound, and might have made search for the intruder, had not Nino at the moment appeared.

It seemed to Spikely, who crouched to the earth, fearing he had betrayed himself, that the baron imagined it had been Nino who had spoken, for no further notice was taken.

The paper Lerue had given to Nino, was now placed in Seymour's hand, who dismissing Horton, for it was really he, broke the seal, and having perused the contents very rapidly, said, as if to himself—"It is

but a poor favour to ask so humbly ; but the Romanists know how to lower their tone, when aught is to be gotten by it ; and times, too, are changed since Kate Howard was on the throne !” Then turning to Nino, he continued, aloud—“ The answer is—’tis granted ! An hour hence let him be at Whitehall, where he will find the necessary document !” Saying this, the Lord High Admiral moved on towards the mansion, and Spikely being joined by his friend, the two entered one of the boats, and rowed towards the Palace of Whitehall.

As they went along, Spikely observed to his companion, that Horton’s sudden appearance had not surprised him half so much as his being found where he had just seen him.

“ There is not much to surprise any one,” replied Nino, “ is there, in finding a soldier of fortune, in such times as these, in such a place as the abode of the Lord High Admiral ? and still less to be surprised at, in his arriving a few hours before the time supposed ?”

“ But what could he want with the Baron Seymour ? You know, as well as I, Signior Nino, that no man ever does anything without a motive ; and if fools would remember that truism a little more, there would be a vast deal less roguery consummated in this world.”

“ The answer, I think,” replied Nino, “ is simple enough ; Horton having distinguished himself abroad in the Protestant cause, now the Protestant cause is again floating upon the sunny tide of prosperity, returns, as hundreds of the Cromwellites will do, to seek employment, or rather rewards, for what they will call their monstrous sacrifices in the cause of truth : he wants employment, and he’ll get it : and why should he not ? Can you tell me of one government throughout the world that does, or ever did, or ever will exist, without the aid of scoundrels ? No, Master Spikely, no ! I’m an Italian, and our government, though wonderful holy in outward show, we all know to be most rotten at the core. But what is yours ? Not a tithe the better ! Look at your glorious Cranmer, who swears to be a Papist, whilst a Protestant at heart, who swears a life of celibacy, whilst all the while he has a wife, and children too ! Ha, ha ! ’tis marvellous to see how men can be deceived ; and men, too, who are believed to have their skulls filled with something more than pap. No, no, *amico*, while the wind blows in the quarter it now does, Horton, the unscrupulous tool of Cromwell, may ask and have !”

“ A *tool*,” said Spikely, “ is an uncourteous term ; and *unscrupulous*, perhaps, as much so. I feel it, because I, too, you know, was Horton’s partner in those glorious times ; and if he be worthy of reward, so am I ; and what he gets I’ll share, or he gets nothing—that I swear !”

At this moment Spikely, who had worked himself up to a pitch of something that approached enthusiasm, was dreadfully lowered in his dignity, by observing Nino, instead of reciprocating in his feelings of hatred to Horton, very coolly take from under his cloak a small mandolin, and as though he had gone upon the waters for no other purpose than to serenade some fair enchantress, begin to sing a sweet Italian air. They had stopped suddenly, just beneath a projecting window that stood out from one of the buildings, or rather castles, that then adorned the

Thames; the words he chanted were in the Italian language, but may be thus rendered into our mother tongue :—

I.

Oh, tarry not ! oh, tarry not,
Unless by thee I am forgot !
That how I mourn thine absence, dear,
Is told in every bitter sigh:
Then why will love not bring thee here ?
He would, if thou hadst loved as I .
Then tarry not ; oh, tarry not,
Unless by thee I am forgot !

II.

Oh, tarry not ! oh, tarry not,
Unless, indeed, I am forgot !
Nor fire, water, earth, nor air,
Has power to keep true souls apart ;
Who really love, all dangers dare,
For that sweet prize—the loved one's heart.
Then tarry not ; oh, tarry not,
Unless, indeed, I am forgot !

They remained listening for a few minutes, when Nino again repeated the last line in a louder tone—"Unless indeed I am forgot."

"Diavolo !" he exclaimed ; "but it seems I really am forgot !"

"By whom ?" enquired Spikely.

"Oh ! a pretty little country-woman of my own," replied the other, "whose wits are as sharp as her eyes, and whose fingers are as quick as her tongue, and quite as snappish. One more trial, and then we'll away."

He again trolled a verse of his serenade, and had just come to the concluding line, when a fair hand was seen thrust from the casement above, and from it fell—what ? a tender *billet-doux* ? No, but a silver cup ! Nino immediately struck up a lively air, and sang something about a lover's thanks to his mistress, for the favours she had bestowed, and the boat passed on.

Spikely, who had picked up the cup from the bottom of the boat, examined it with the eye of a connoisseur, and exclaimed,—“Why, man, this is the work of Cellini, or I am no judge of Italian art !”

“It may be so, or the handywork of a tinker, for what I care,” said Nino, “so that it be silver. What ever its form now, ’twill soon change it, by the magic power of the furnace and the crucible ; those arms upon it would tell a tale too plainly for me to feel quite safe while it was in my possession.”

“They are those of the Earl of Shrewsbury,” said Spikely.

“They are,” replied the other ; “and that was his mansion we have just left. Every week, *mia bella* there, drops love’s offerings from yon casement, into the bark of her faithful gondolier. I give her love, and she gives me whatever she can lay her hands on ; she’s worth her weight in gold to me, and may be of wonderful use to us in working out the plan we have formed. It often puzzles me to account for the many failures we clever fellows meet with ; is it not strange, how few of those

who live by their wits, and have talents to deceive the whole world, should so seldom make a fortune by their labours? I'll swear that a thousand times in my life, I have made my dupes bear me triumphantly to the very threshold of Fortune's Temple, when all at once, bang comes the door right in my face, and throws me back again, as far away as ever. There's one thing I am determined upon, and that is, if this our glorious scheme should fail, I'll no longer make my votive offerings at the shrine of Mercury, that God of thieves, but will forswear the world, and at once turn monk: it's the better trade of the two, I begin to think."

In a like strain they continued to converse until they reached the Whitehall Stairs, where they landed, and at once bent their course towards that portion of the Palace appropriated to the offices, over which the Lord High Admiral had controul.

CHAPTER XXVII.

*This world n'is but a thoroughfare full of woe,
And we be pilgrims passing to and fro:
Death is an end of every world's sore.*

CHAUCER.

n

EVENING had began to close her shutters against the day, when Edward Osborne and the Bridge-shooter arrived at the Cottage on the Heath. To their great astonishment, they found Alyce and her daughter as much surprised at their arrival, as they themselves were at discovering their visit to the Heath so perfectly unlooked for.

"Well, now," said the Bridge-shooter, "isn't this all of a piece with old mother's wonderful witchcraft?—'Tell Edward,' she said in her mysterious way, 'if he would serve those he loves, he will be at the Heath this night!'—I knew it was all nonsense, but what whim she could have in her head for sending us all this way, puzzles me vastly; and then to tell such an abominable story, as to say we were expected. Oh, yes, indeed she did! she said we were expected: I should like to know by whom."

"Perhaps by Flora," said Anne, "for she returns to-night."

"No, does she though!" exclaimed William, his face beaming with perfect delight; "if that be the case, I'll forgive mother all her nonsense."

"Why, Edward," exclaimed Anne, looking anxiously at young Osborne, "what ails you? you have become suddenly pale as death—are you ill?"

"No, dear Anne," he replied; "but a pain darted, as it seemed, through my heart, so sharp and sudden, that—but it is gone now—And, now tell me—but why do I ask, for I may guess I am sure—whose drawings those are that so profusely adorn these walls?"

"Oh, they are the work of our new friend, our protector, the young artist, Walter Lerue!"

As she pronounced the name, Edward fixed his eyes upon her so intently, and with such a peculiar enquiring gaze, as though he would through her eyes read her very heart, that an involuntary blush suffused

her lovely face, rendering it, if possible, more lovely than before. What did he wish to learn? what did he fear to discover? he scarcely knew; but he certainly now regarded Anne with different eyes, with different feelings to those of former days; there was in his breast a kind of jealous sensation growing up, that caused him much pain, if she appeared to take interest in aught that was unconnected with her former habits. The blush had died, almost as soon as born, and had been called into existence by feelings very, very different, to those poor Edward now seemed to delight in torturing his own breast with; Lerue had had no share in her thoughts at that moment, while Osborne believed sincerely that she was thinking of little else.

Now, in the most unconcerned manner, she began to expatiate largely upon the beauties of each sketch, which she, one by one, brought to the notice of Edward. It is astonishing through what a dim glass jealousy looks upon the merits of any one regarded as a rival. At another time, or had they been the work of another's hand, Edward would have been the first to extol the great beauties, which these sketches undoubtedly possessed; but now, the only parts his eye could rest upon with the least feeling of satisfaction, were those wherein he believed he could discover some blemish; not the most trivial fault that he could pick out, but he magnified to such an extent, that ere long the faults appeared far greater than the merits, and poor Anne began to feel a little ashamed of having praised so highly, works that were so open to severe criticism. When the likeness of Anne was placed before him, he actually burst into a laugh of derision, and declared that he could not perceive one feature that at all resembled the original.—“What!” he exclaimed, “that smile like yours?—those lips like little Anne’s?”

“But I am not little Anne now, Edward,” said the young beauty; “and perhaps my lips are different to what they were.”

“They *are* different, *very* different,” said Edward, gazing at his young mistress with an expression she had never witnessed in him before; “they are different, for they are more beautiful, a thousand times more beautiful, than ever—”

Osborne’s face burnt like fire, and he looked round at every body, perfectly bewildered at his own unexpected burst of enthusiasm.

“Mother, mother!” exclaimed Anne, smiling more than ever kindly upon Edward, “did you hear that? Why, sober Edward has actually become a flatterer. Well, I must be downright lovely, if Edward has been able to discover a single beauty in this poor face; but up to this moment I never imagined he was aware that I had either eyes, nose, mouth, or lips. Why, Edward, if you go on at this rate, we shall have you one of these days falling in love. I should like to see you in love!”

“Perhaps you will, sooner than you expect,” said the Bridge-shooter, very innocently; but the observation brought upon him a severe frown from Edward, who said—“No one will ever see that day, for were I to be so mad as to love, I would never be mad enough to show it—at least until I knew I was loved as madly.”

“Then, I suppose, Edward,” said Anne, “you will expect the fair one to be the first to disclose her passion, and on her knees pray of Master sober Edward to take pity on her sad condition, and to give her a little

bit of his carefully-guarded heart, just to keep her from despair. No, no, my dear brother, such a system will never do. Mother and I must give you some lessons; she shall tell you how my dear father made love to her; and when you have learnt your first lesson, you shall repeat it to me; you know that I have a great deal of patience, so that you may go over and over again, every bit of it, without the least fear that I shall be tired; and when you are tolerable perfect, I will introduce you to the sweetest little wife——"

"I think we had much better look over the rest of these drawings," interrupted Edward, "than talk such nonsense. But tell me," he continued, as he gazed in perfect admiration upon one he now took up, "know you whether this be the likeness of any living being, or the happy creation of the artist's fancy? I never beheld a face through which the purity of the soul seemed so truly to beam forth, as it does in this."

"Would you believe it," she replied, "but that innocent face really belongs to the very little wife I have just mentioned? It is the likeness of Lillia, the Lilly of the Inn."

"Poor girl!" observed Alyce; "I fear me she is too pure, and too innocent to be allowed by Heaven to remain long upon this wicked earth. Ever since the day on which Anne and Master Lerue found her in the ruins on the Heath, she has scarcely spoken, and there is such a fixed, such determined melancholy upon her mind, that at every moment it seems to be eating away her life. Her only prayer was to be taken to her father, but as he was from home, and knowing how much more care we could bestow upon her, than she possibly could receive from strangers at the Ferry, we insisted upon her remaining here until to-day, when knowing that her father would return ere night, no persuasion could prevail upon her to delay her departure."

"From daybreak," said Anne, "she never ceased to pray of us to take her home; so, as she had never quitted her bed since the day she first came, we fitted up one of our vans with all sorts of furs, and everything we could find to keep away the cold, and in it, as she lay upon her bed, we conveyed her to the Inn. I would have remained with her, but she insisted upon my departure, as she wished, she said, to be quite alone until her father came. It was with great reluctance I obeyed that wish, but I will be with her again at earliest morn. She has some secret sorrow preying upon her mind, I am certain, but of what nature I cannot guess; nor could I tempt her to disclose aught that might give me a clue to discover any way of bringing relief to her wounded mind."

Hearing this account of the Lilly of the Inn, Edward once more looked upon the picture, and fancied he could trace through the sweet, but sad expression of the countenance, the foreboding of an early grave.

Edward was now made acquainted with all they knew concerning Lillia and her father, and he soon became deeply interested in their fates. So intently were all their minds fixed upon the subject, that they were not aware, until the moon had risen high in the heavens, and was sending her bright rays through the casement as messengers, to tell them that night was fast approaching, how long they had been talking upon the melancholy theme.

Anne happening to raise her eyes towards the window, suddenly

uttered an exclamation of fear, that caused them all to start to their feet. "I am certain," she said, "I saw a man looking in at the casement."

"Did you, Mistress Anne?" said the Bridge-shooter, starting towards it; "then I'll just ask him what he wants, and —"

"No, no,—do not venture; it may be one of those desperate people that are now so continually prowling about."

"If so," observed Edward, "I think the sooner we make him prowl somewhere else the better!"

Saying this, and before Anne could prevent him, Edward at once flew to the outer door, followed by the Bridge-shooter; when it was opened they found a country lad standing before them; he was crying, and panting for breath, and appeared exhausted with running.

"Was it you who looked in at the window?" enquired Edward, in an angry tone.

"Hoiy?" exclaimed the lad, "not hoiy, maister! Hoiy know my place better nor that."

"Then did you observe any one else doing so, as you came up?" said the Bridge-shooter.

"Hoiy? not hoiy, maister!" again exclaimed the lad, as well as his sobbing and his lack of breath would allow him; "hoiy seed no 'un lookin in!"

"But why do we find you here? What want you?" enquired Edward.

"Hoiy wants young missus; and my young missus wants her too!"

"And who is your young *missus*?" said the Bridge-shooter.

"Why, don't you know? gad hoiy thought every fool knowed my young missus, bless her! It only shows that you're not a poor un; or you'd a known my young missus, bless her! All the poor 'uns about these parts knows maister's daughter, Lillia, bless her!" Here he blubbered aloud.

Anne recognising the voice of the lad, came to the door, and enquired if Lillia had sent him.

"No, not she," was his reply; "not she, bless her!"

"Then who did?" said Edward.

"Moll, the milkmaid!" exclaimed the boy; "Moll sent hoiy; and told hoiy to run loike mad up to the cottage; and so hoiy have run'd loike mad: and mad we'll all run, if young missus dies, bless her!" Saying this, he wiped his eyes with his arm, and blubbered afresh.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Anne, "is Lillia then so very ill?"

"She's as bad as bad can be, bless her! so Moll says, and Moll says, that young missus says, that she wants you to come to her directly; and hoiy'm to take care on you, down to the Ferry."

"No, my good lad, I have others to take care of me," said Anne; "so do you run back again——"

"Loike mad?" interrupted the boy.

"No, but as quickly as you can, and say that I will be there almost as soon as you are."

"No you won't," said the lad; "for hoiy knows it'll do her good to know that you're cummin, and hoiy'd run my legs off to do her good, bless her!"

Without waiting another instant, the lad started off at the top of his

speed, in seeming delight at what he considered the good news he was to take to his young mistress.

A few minutes after, and Anne, with Edward, followed by the Bridge-shooter, was on her way towards the Ferry. The moon was shining so brightly, that all around seemed light as day.

Moonlight has a peculiar power upon some persons, particularly upon lovers; it seems to soften the heart, and bring on a pleasing sadness; and if two young people should happen to find themselves walking together in its silvery light, ten to one but its supposed influence on the brain begins to act, and if they are not already mad enough to be in love with each other, they are pretty sure to be so before their walk is ended. Edward and Anne had been walking rapidly for some time, and had not yet uttered one word.

"You are very thoughtful, Edward," said Anne, at last breaking the silence; "and I noticed, the moment you came to the cottage, how sad you looked; and I have also remarked that your last letters have been little less sad than are your looks."

"Why should I be sad, dear Anne?" said Osborne, endeavouring to speak cheerfully; "no man on earth, the world would say, has less cause than I."

"But what say you?" observed Anne; "the world seldom makes just remarks; and none but those who suffer, can know the pangs of hidden sorrow. You have always called me your sister, and I have always loved you with a sister's love; then if there be aught that has caused you pain, confide the truth to me; there is no greater comfort to the human heart than that of sympathy; and where will you find a heart that can more truly sympathize with yours, than mine? Come, Edward, tell me, tell me all, for something there is upon your mind that robs it of repose. I have never kept a secret from you; then why should you from me, if you are my own true brother?"

"Dear Anne," said Osborne, "I do long to tell you part of what I feel; and it was to do so that I now am here; but fearing the wisdom of the step, I hesitate; because——"

As he said this he looked round to see that the Bridge-shooter was not within hearing, for he felt his resolution tottering terribly.

"Because—and yet I know not why I hesitate, for what I would say is for your happiness, so I will speak out, and then leave all to your own discretion."

So seriously had Osborne said this, that Anne for a moment felt really alarmed, not dreaming what could follow such a commencement.

"It is," said Edward, after a moment's pause, "it is concerning this Master Walter Lerue, this young artist, that I would speak."

"In the name of goodness," exclaimed the lovely girl, "what of him? Surely he cannot in any way be the cause of your sadness?"

"He is the sole cause," replied Osborne; "from all you have written to me about him, it seems, as well as I can judge, that the attentions he is so anxious to bestow upon you, spring from a warmer feeling than that of suddenly-formed friendship; for Heaven's sake, dear Anne, be guarded how you allow your thoughts to turn towards him!"

"Why, Edward," exclaimed the astonished girl; "you are surely jealous of Master Lerue!"

"Jealous!" Osborne said, with a kind of sneer; "why should I be jealous? Even were you really to love him, it could matter naught to me, but to yourself would be certain misery; and it is to save you from that, that I now warn you. You are the sole heiress of one of the greatest merchants of our land—Lerue a stranger, and unknown—a poor artist, no fitting match for you. Be sure of this, dear Anne, that to wed you with such as he, your father never would consent."

"My father will consent to give me to whom I like," said Anne, proudly, "be he rich or poor, a prince or a beggar, or he gives no consent at all. And do you, Edward, think so poorly of me, as to imagine that poverty or wealth should sway me from, or to any man? No, believe me, it is my present thought never to wed at all; but when I do, I will seek for my happiness in my husband's heart, not in his purse. Dear Edward," she continued, as she placed her hand kindly upon his arm, "if that be all that has so much troubled you, set your mind at ease, for in truth I am in but little danger from Master Lerue, unless, indeed, your having placed him before my mind may cause me to discover some hidden charms, that, but for you, I had never thought of looking for."

The moment she said this, the Bridge-shooter's observation concerning the perversity of the female mind recurred to him, and he began to feel sorry he had drawn her attention so strongly upon the very man of whom he would rather she should never think again. Fearing he had done more harm than good, poor Osborne became more than ever thoughtful; and Anne, too, for a time seemed lost in a reverie. She was the first to speak; but before she did so, she looked kindly at her childhood's earliest friend, and then, with a smile, said—"Edward, I know that every word you have said, has sprung from the kindest, purest motives, and I thank you—indeed I do; and if it will give you one moment's ease to hear me make a promise, which I will never break, listen to me——"

They had just passed the end of a cross-road, and had not gone many steps beyond, when exactly at the moment Anne was about to make her pledge, they were caused to start, by hearing a female voice calling loudly, "William! William! William!"

They turned round, and were very much-surprised to see "William" running towards a wagon that was just emerging from the cross-road, and in another moment were still more surprised, to see a young woman, jumping from it into William's arms. It was Flora, returning to the cottage; she had caught sight of her lover as he passed the end of the road, and was too much delighted at seeing him, to allow her to remain quiet.

"Well," she said, "that old gipsy must have been a witch, for she told me I should find something precious at a cross-road."

"And you found my precious self there," said the Bridge-shooter, giving Flora a hearty embrace; "and now you shall go to the Ferry with us."

"I can't," said Flora; "I've got all my things in the wagon, and I must not leave them; so, lift me up again."

Poor William looked terribly crest-fallen, to think that she was to go one way and he the other.

Anne, guessing his feelings, insisted upon his accompanying Flora home, "being," as she said, "quite safe without more protection than what Edward could bestow."

The Bridge-shooter did not wait to be pressed to return, but at once told the driver to push forward, and placing Flora's arm in his own, the two trudged on happily together behind the wagon—"in order," as he said, "to enjoy the beauty of the evening," but in reality, to have a little bit of comfortable chat unnoticed.

As they strolled along, Flora said—"Now, who could have expected to see you here to-night."

"That's exactly what we want to know," replied the Bridge-shooter: "mother sent us off to the heath on a wild-goose chase, after some one or other, whom, she said, was expecting us; and now we are here, we find we can't find any one that will confess we were expected at all. I say, Flora, I'm going to tell you something that will astonish your very eyebrows, and make them start right up to the top of your head."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Flora, really raising her eyebrows.

"But I do, though," replied the Bridge-shooter. "What do you think? I'm downright certain that Master Edward is in love at last!"

"Gracious!" exclaimed Flora; "Master Edward in love, it can't be."

"Can't it?" said William, with a nod of the head; "can't it? Do you think I don't know all the symptoms by this time, eh? A young fellow doesn't get pale for nothing—do you remember how pale I used to be? and he doesn't lose his appetite without eating, for nothing neither—don't you recollect what a little I used to eat?"

"I can't say I do," was Flora's reply.

"Well, then," continued the Bridge-shooter, "Master Edward does get pale—and Master Edward doesn't eat; and that's not half the symptoms he shews—Master Edward is jealous."

"Jealous! of whom?" said Flora; "perhaps it would be as well, before you tell me that, just to let me into the secret of whom it is he loves—but it can't be."

"I'll swear it!" replied William; "and he's very far gone too; but not half so far as I'd have been gone, long before this, if I had been in his place, for she is a duck! By-the-by, I wonder why, when we are fond of any nice girl, we call her a duck? I'm uncommon fond of ducks, certainly, but I never saw one that ever put me in mind of you—except, perhaps, a little in the walk."

"I'll box your ears, sir," said Flora, "if you are so ungallant again, as to compare my walk to that of a duck's! I don't think ducks have feet like these to walk upon," and out she held one of the prettiest little feet ever seen.

"Only when they are such darling ducks as you!" replied the Bridge-shooter, placing his arm round her little waist, and taking one of her hands in his own; "and I am sure you will say *she* is, when you know her to be our lovely young mistress, Anne!"

"You don't mean to say she has touched his insensible heart at last?"

Well, I should be delighted were that true : but how did you discover the fact ?”

“ By being in love myself,” replied the Bridge-shooter ; “ having gone through all the degrees—of seeing, admiring, fearing, being jealous ; and uncommonly jealous I know he is, though he keeps it to himself, of a certain young painter, named Walter Lerue.”

Upon this William recounted the whole affair of Lerue rescuing Alyce and her daughter, and of his becoming a very frequent visitor at the cottage—and of what he had just heard regarding Lillia—“ But,” said he, as he concluded his narrative, “ the greatest proof of Master Edward being in love is, that he has turned poet. Oh, dear ! when a young man begins to scribble poetry, depend upon it, his case is hopeless. You must know, amongst his waste papers, that are thrown aside for me to burn, what should I see, one day, but half-a-sheet covered all over with attempts at finding rhymes, such as—‘ heath, beneath ; beneath, heath ; teeth —’ he was evidently thinking of our cottage on the Heath, and, may be, of Anne’s lovely teeth : only this very morning my doubts were rendered certainties, by finding this scrap of paper.”

William took out a piece of paper from his pouch ; but, brightly as the moon was shining, Flora could not make out the words, further than the title, which being in a larger hand, she could plainly decypher—
“ THE DREAM OF LOVE.”

“ Really a very pretty conceit,” observed Flora, “ and I’ll place it under my pillow to-night ; and who knows but it may bring me a dream of love.”

“ You’ve got the reality,” said William, “ and that’s a plaguy deal better than any dream.”

We must now leave them to pursue their idle chat on their way to the cottage, while we once more join Edward and the lovely Anne.

They had now reached the Ferry-house ; and leaving Osborne in the room below, Anne ascended to the apartment of the drooping Lilly of the Inn.

“ Oh, bless you, dear Anne !” said Lillia, in a sweet but feeble voice, as she raised herself slowly on her couch, to welcome her beloved young friend ; “ oh, bless you, for this kind, this prompt attention to the wishes of a poor miserable girl !”

“ But why miserable, Lillia ?” said Anne, kissing the pale lips of the sufferer ; “ why say miserable, when hope seems to have once more dawned upon the fortunes of your father ? You know his present absence has been caused, so he informed you in his last letter, by having found a friend where he could never have dreamt of finding one, who will, he doubts not, be the means of his restoration to his former station—then why this misery ?”

“ It was to tell you why,” replied Lillia, “ that I have prayed your coming hither—I am dying !”

“ For Heaven’s sake, talk not thus !” exclaimed Anne, taking the burning hand of Lillia, and pressing it to her lips, “ talk not thus : there are many, many years, believe me, of happy life in store for you ; and doubtless the secret trouble that now appears to weigh you down,

when I shall know 't cause, will prove but the fleeting fancy of a childish dream."

"It was a childish dream," replied Lillia, "but one that seemed so real, its sad remembrance can never be again effaced from out my heart, wherein it took its rise, until that heart shall cease to beat. 'Twill not be long before 'tis still—its throbs already come slower, slower, and fainter; and it is because I fear its little remaining life will pass away before my poor father once more shall look upon his child, that I would say to you all I had intended to have confessed to none but him. Tell him all, dear Anne, all I shall say to you! 'Twill kill him, Anne! I feel my death will kill him!" As she uttered these words, a flood of tears burst from the fountains of her inmost heart, that seemed to choke her.

Anne wept bitterly, too, but her anxiety to learn the cause of the poor child's wretchedness, in the hope of bringing her relief, caused her to exert her every power to appear composed, and as Lillia became for a moment calm, she kindly pressed her at once to ease her mind of what she wished to disclose.

Lillia gazing at Anne with a look of intense feeling, exclaimed—"You, you are the cause!"

"I," exclaimed Anne, in a tone of perfect wonderment; "I the cause of your sorrow? Lillia, Lillia, you must be now, indeed, in a childish dream!"

"No," replied the poor girl, "the dream is gone, and to you I owe my waking. Do not think that I have called you here to upbraid you—Heaven forbid! You knew not of the death-blight to my life, that lay in those eyes now looking on me in kindness and pity—you knew not that their power, while giving life to another's hopes, was bringing death to mine."

"You speak in riddles, Lillia, indeed you do," said Anne; "what other mean you?"

"Walter," replied Lillia, "Walter Lerue! I loved him, more than my life I loved him, which my early death will prove." Again she burst into tears.

Anne now remembered the scene that had taken place in the ruins of the chapel, the evident confusion that had seized upon Lerue, when first he discovered the senseless form of Lillia lying on the earth; his precipitate retreat the moment Lillia had been conveyed to the cottage, and his continued absence, while she was there. The truth seemed at once suddenly to flash upon her mind.

Lillia, now that the secret which had been devouring her very life was once divulged, revealed to Anne her most inmost thoughts—she took all blame from him—"Walter," she said, "had been kind to her, as he would have been to any other child; but she herself had transformed that kindness into a feeling, like that with which her own heart glowed—she loved him, and she thought herself beloved." The mist of overwrought affection had blinded her to the truth; that mist had been dispelled by what she had beheld in the ruined chapel—all the bright fabrics her imagination had built up in her childish mind, had been, as by the lightning's flash, shattered, never to be raised again.

Anne having learnt the truth, endeavoured, by every means she could devise, to raise a hope in Lillia's breast, feeling that hope was the only medicine that ever cured the wounded mind. She told her truly how indifferent Lerue was to herself; that with the one slight exception, all his acts to her had ever been but those of common courtesy.

The willing heart is easily persuaded, and for a moment a ray of hope did light up the pale innocent features of that poor drooping lilly. Lillia now endeavoured to deceive herself anew; by trying to believe that she had been deceived in what she had seen. Her mind had become so weak from illness, that any picture placed before it seemed to her reality: she clung to any hope held out to her. Suddenly she started, as she exclaimed—"Hark! hark! oh, my longing ears deceive me not this time! 'Tis he! thank Heaven, 'tis he—it is my father!"

Anne could distinguish no sound; but Lillia insisted that she had heard his voice.

The child was right, for in another instant the old man rushed into the room, half frantic, and he threw his arms about his child, and kissed her a thousand times.

Edward had, in the few moments the old man was below, told him, as guardedly as he could, of the sad condition of his child.

The old man scarcely heeded what he said, for he brought such happy news with him, that he felt that sorrow would never dare to visit them again.

The little hope which Anne had raised in Lillia's breast, and the sudden appearance of her adored father, had caused such a glow to overspread her features, that no one then to have looked upon her, could have dreamt that she and death would, ere long, become united.

Anne now took an affectionate leave of her suffering friend, and left her with her father by her side, recounting all the happy chances that had befallen him while away, and how his dearest hopes had been most strangely consummated.

When Anne rejoined young Osborne, she found him sadder than ever.—"Anne," he said, as they commenced their homeward journey, "I have been thinking, what could have been the promise you were about to make me, when we were interrupted by hearing Flora's voice calling to William."

"I almost forget," said Anne. "Of what were we talking?—oh, I remember now—it was about your fears for me, in case I should lose my heart to Master Walter Lerue. Be assured of this, that lose it when I may, it will never be to him; and my promise would have been, and shall be still, that the moment I have become silly enough to fall in love, you shall be the first to know it—will that satisfy you, Edward?"

As she was saying this, a sound fell upon their ears, as of one suffering great pain. They were close to the little smithy, that had once been the dwelling of Walter Cromwell, and in which his son, King Henry's great favourite, Thomas Cromwell, afterwards Earl of Essex, had worked as a blacksmith, when a boy.

"Down on your knees," said a gruff voice from within; "down on your knees, while I rivet this iron ring round your neck; and be thankful to me for not doing it while it was red hot?"

They heard a violent blow, and then another cry of pain. The door of the smithy being open, and the blazing fire of the forge within showing every thing plainly that was passing in the smith's shop, they could not help checking their steps for a moment, and gazing in. An old man, whose back was towards them, was kneeling upon the ground; near him stood a surly-looking fellow, whose dress and badge plainly told that he was the tipstaff of the village. A gruff, elderly, but athletic, Cyclops, for the smith had but one eye, was in the act of bending an iron ring round the neck of the old man. Close to him stood a boy, holding in one hand a square lump of iron, that was to act as a portable anvil; and in the other a rivet and a hammer.

"He won't be so fond of running away again," said the tipstaff, "now he knows what it is to be branded upon the breast with a hot iron; and I can tell you, my master, we did it pretty deep for you."

A shudder passed over the old man's frame as he thought of the dreadful pain he had that morning suffered, the wound still burning like a fire on his chest.

"What can this mean?" said Anne, as trembling she whispered into Osborne's ear.

"I will enquire," replied Edward; "you step aside, for this is no sight for you, dear Anne."

Anne moved on a few paces, and Osborne entered the smithy.

"What are you doing to that old man?" he said.

"What's that to you?" was the smith's uncourteous reply; "we are doing what the law allows; and if you doubt it, read that!" Saying this, he pointed to a dirty-looking bill that was nailed to the wall; it was a copy of the law against vagrants.

"Oh! it's all right, young sir," said the tipstaff; "this old scoundrel would be begging, so honest Master Blaze, here, took him before his worship, and had him assigned to him as a slave for two years; he is branded on the breast; and if now he should run away, and absent himself for fourteen days—those are the words of the act—he will be branded on the forehead, or the ball of the cheek, and then become the slave of honest Master Blaze for ever."

"But that iron ring," said Edward; "surely the law does not allow of that?"

"Doesn't it?" said the smith, with a laugh; "you shall see!" And he began to hammer away at the rivet, as the boy held the lump of iron beneath the ring; the jarring of the ring at every blow, caused great pain to the old man, and he cried out for mercy.

"Will nothing tempt you to be more feeling?" said Edward, his blood rising with indignation, as much against the framers of such an inhuman law, as against those who were now carrying its spirit into practice; "will money buy your feeling, if you have any left to sell, which I own I doubt?"

"Money will buy anything in these times," replied the smith. "What will you give, if I put him to nothing harder than blowing the forge? he'll only have to do it eighteen hours out of the twenty-four; the other six he may sleep away in the ash-hole there beneath; it's a snug and comfortable bed, young master, I can tell you."

"Take all I have," said Edward, throwing down a leathern purse, "and give him as much of your humanity as you can, for the amount."

The smith took the purse, and weighing it in his hand seemed debating within himself what quantity he could afford to give; at last he said—"G—up, old fool; but as the ring is on, why, there it must stay; take the handle of the bellows, and to your work. Master Blaze is an honest man, and having passed his word, he won't break it."

The old man tottered towards the forge, and as he passed close to Edward, said—"God will bless you for this!" and then cast a look of gratitude, so intense, that for a long time after Edward fancied he could see the old man still before him.

Edward now left the smithy, and with Anne hurried on towards their home. When they arrived at the cottage, they found the Bridge-shooter awaiting them at the gate.

"Master Edward," said the Bridge-shooter, "were you ever surprised in your life? but if you were not, you will be now. Who's the last person you would ever expect to find beneath this roof?—But you'd never guess; no, never—that you could not! So come in, but mind you don't fall down with wonder!"

When Osborne entered the room, he certainly was surprised; he stood for a moment motionless, as if doubting his own vision, for there he beheld not only his master, whom he believed to be in Holland, but also the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, and by him the blind Eoline.

"It's many a day since we have met," said the Cripple, addressing Osborne; "and many a night, since that on which we said adieu by the water-side!"

"But day nor night," said Eoline, with her lovely voice, "but day nor night has ever passed, without our offering up a prayer for him, to whom we owed our safety, and our lives."

Anne, who had so often heard of the Blind Beauty of the Minorics, was greatly interested now she saw her. The contrast between the Cripple and his wife was so striking, that she kept looking from one to the other in wonder.

In order to explain how the Cripple could possibly be found beneath the roof of Master Hewet, we must take the reader back to the night of the storm. When the merchant and his brave companions had approached as near as they dared to the fatal sands, they plainly saw that there were at least two persons upon them still alive: more than one, they also saw lying as if dead. The breakers against the sands were so frightful, that it was hopeless to attempt to run the boat nearer. At last it struck the merchant, that by tying one of the stones that lay in the bottom of the boat as ballast, to the end of a long rope, they might succeed in throwing one end to those in peril. After several failures, they at last accomplished their aim; the end with the stone attached to it, was seized by some one on the sands, and they could observe that he was, apparently, fastening it round the body of another. They presently saw him stand erect and extend both his arms, which they took for a signal to haul in the rope: this they did as rapidly as they could, for they knew that to it was fastened a human being—half dead with fear and cold; half drowned by being drawn so far through the waves, a female

was at last safely got into the boat. "No^d a moment was lost in again casting the rope to the sands, and again they succeeded in saving another helpless being from a watery grave. It was useless to persevere further, for they understood from him they had just saved, that all else had perished.

So imperfect was the light of the breaking day, so altered by fear and suffering were those they had rescued, that it was not until they were once again safe in the ship, that the merchant recognised in the man, the Cripple-of-the-bridge, and in the helpless female, the blind Eoline.

The merchant, when the sufferers were somewhat recovered, was still more astonished at the Cripple falling on his knees before him, and asking his pardon, and blessing him for saving more than life to him, his adored Eoline. They had journeyed at once, after landing on the Sussex shore, towards the Heath—Eoline conveyed in a litter, borne along by two horses; the merchant and the Cripple walking the greater part of the way on foot, on either side of the litter.

There being strong reasons why the Cripple should not be supposed as yet in England, or that he was even alive, the merchant kept to the north of London; but wishing Edward to be at the Heath that night, he had called on his way at the cottage of the Bridge-shooter's mother, where he left the message for Osborne.

When the Bridge-shooter heard this, he exclaimed—"There, now! I knew it would all come out. Is it not strange, that she will do nothing without mixing up her magical nonsense with it? It does not seem now very wonderful—does it?—that she should have known that we were expected here to-night?"

The merchant was again commencing his narrative, and explaining that the feeble state of Eoline had caused them to pause on their journey, for some hours, and this had made them arrive so long after the time they had expected to be at the cottage.—"But we have more wonders yet to tell," said the merchant; "have we not, Willy-of-the-bridge?"

The Cripple nodded his head in assent; when who should be announced but Walter Lerue!

"I am right glad he has come," said the merchant; "for now I can thank him heartily for saving you, my Alyce dear, and my no less darling child."

"You will be charmed with him," replied Alyce, "he is so clever, so amiable, and Anne says, so handsome: between ourselves, I think she is half in love with him."

Osborne, upon hearing this, notwithstanding Anne's assertion of Lerue being perfectly indifferent to her, felt a pang at his heart he had never experienced before: he looked at her reproachfully, but she observed him not: the name of Lerue had called up to her mind the whole melancholy scene she had so lately witnessed at the Ferry: she had formed her own ideas regarding Lerue, and those were greatly at variance with poor Lillia's. When Lerue entered, he was, for a moment, greatly confused at finding so many persons where he had expected and hoped to have found but two. The merchant waited not for any introduction, but taking him cordially by the hand, first thanked him for the service he had

rendered his wife and child, and then gave him a hearty welcome to the cottage. Anne, in spite of her endeavours to appear as usual, could not cast off a feeling of restraint, which the knowledge she had that night gained from the pale lips of Lillia, would force upon her. Osborne sat moodily in one corner, and became more moody the instant he observed the handsome appearance and superior style of bearing which belonged to Walter Lerue. The moment Flora cast her eyes upon him, she whispered to William—"I am sure I have seen that face before, or one so like it, that it seems to me the same. Do you know any one like this Master Lerue, William?"

The Bridge-shooter, eyeing Lerue from head to foot, declared he had never seen any one at all resembling him.

Walter had placed himself between Alyce and the merchant, and appeared to be in deep converse with them; but if one might judge by eyes, his thoughts were in an opposite direction, in fact, exactly where Anne was sitting, for at every moment his eyes were cast upon her lovely face, as if to catch her own, and by their soft expression, learn her approval of his admiration.

The more Flora examined the features of Lerue, the more convinced was she that they had met before.

"Master Edward," she said, "I want to try a bit of the witch's trade—lend me your ring, will you, for a minute? Conjurors always borrow a ring."

Edward, without taking his eyes off Anne, removed the ring from his finger, and gave it to Flora.

"Now you shall see," she said again, whispering to the Bridge-shooter, "which is the greatest witch, your mother or I."

Taking an opportunity of crossing the room to assist Eolipe, as she was returning she suddenly stopped, and stooping to the ground as if to pick up something, on again rising, she presented the ring to Lerue, saying—"I have found a ring, which I think, sir, must have belonged to you."

Lerue, the moment he had glanced upon it, blushed, and then became suddenly pale—"It is not mine," he said, and then turned away his head to avoid the fixed gaze of Flora.

"How silly I must be, to be sure," said Flora, still looking at Lerue, "how silly not to know that this ring is the one Lord George Talbot gave to Edward Osborne, there, some years ago." She then returned the ring to Edward, who had been so engrossed by his own thoughts, which more and more took the form of jealousy, that he had scarcely heeded either the actions or the words of Flora—"I am right," she said, softly to the Bridge-shooter, as she again seated herself by him; "but we must keep the secret for the present."

"I am sure I shall," replied the Bridge-shooter, "for I don't know what it is."

"But you shall," said Flora, "but mind—your finger on your lip, or we may make mischief here." Then in a still softer tone she whispered, "Lerue, as he is called, is not Lerue, but the heir to the Earl of Shrewsbury."

The Bridge-shooter raised his eyebrows until they were nearly lost under his hair.

"Egad! and now I look again," replied the Bridge-shooter, "it is the very fellow that made me so jealous when first I loved you. But why is he here in disguise?"

"Hush!" ejaculated Flora, "hush, be cautious!"

When all was hurriedly made ready for the accommodation of Eoline and the Cripple, they arose, and Lerue, taking advantage of the opportunity, bade a quick adieu, and left the room. As he went out he gave Flora a peculiar look, which she guessing the meaning of, said—"I'll lock the outer gate, William!" and without waiting a reply, followed Lerue.

When they were out of the house, he turned to Flora, and said—"You know me!"

"I do!" she replied. "But why is Lord Talbot here under a false name?"

"For the same reason, perhaps," retorted the young lord, "that Master William Hewet takes the name of Allen. I was not long in his presence before I recognised the king's rich merchant. Keep my secret," he continued, "and your reward shall not be stinted: as earnest, take this gold!"

"I want not gold," said Flora; "I have a treasure within more precious far than gold."

"Indeed! what is that?"

"My young mistress's fame!" As she uttered these words, she closed the gate, and hurried into the cottage.

Lerue, for so we shall call him for the present, was about to take the way to the Ferry; but, checking himself, he turned the contrary way, towards the other side of the heath. The strange meeting with those he had encountered that night perplexed him terribly.—"That stupid girl will spoil all! But why should I dread the disclosure? He who is to be the Earl of Shrewsbury cannot marry a clothier's daughter; and why this continued folly? To-morrow I will at once to town; and now I am again reconciled to my father, will endeavour, by gaiety and courtly pleasures, to forget the Beauty of the Heath."

The next morning he set about fulfilling his new formed plans. Wishing to go to Whitehall, he determined to do so by water, and therefore hastened by a rather circuitous route down to the Ferry. He had done this to avoid the cottage, and also that he might not pass the Ferry-house; but, by mistake, he had entered a lane which brought him right in front of poor Lillia's abode. Upon looking up, he started; for, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, the whole was closed, as though death lay therein. He hurried past, and, seeing a country lad, he asked if any one were dead at the Ferry-house.

"Dead, yes, maister—alas, there is!"

"And who is it, my good lad?" said Lerue, dreading, he knew not why, the answer the boy might give.

"Why, my poor dear young missus!—Ho, ho, ho! Yes, she's dead, and we shall never see her agin, bless her! Did you ever see my young missus, sir—little Lillia? She's dead, and I wish I was too, bless her!"

Lerue threw a piece of money to the boy, and hurried to the boat.

As he proceeded on his way towards London, that great emporium of wealth, of poverty, of virtue, and of vice, he gave way to deep despondency. Lerue possessed a mind strong in feeling, but weak in resolution, and he knew it. He could not, do what he would, shut out from his mind's eye the little ostler of the Ferry, now closed, as it were, by the hand of death; the walls appeared to his imagination to be transparent, through which he saw, as in a vision, the withered blossom lying on her couch of death—the old man's grief—the father's deep despair. "And this is the work of my own vain folly," he said, and then heaved a bitter sigh; "poor child! she was too pure to inhabit a world like this, and Heaven, in pity, has taken her to its blest abode; but would to heaven I had been spared the pain of being the executioner of fate's mysterious decrees!"

Not a word, not a look, not an act of poor Lillia's since he had known her, but now rose up again like ghosts passing o'er memory's glass. At one moment he thought he would return, and give what consolation he could to the bereaved father, but his courage failed him, and he still went on. Had he returned, he would have beheld a scene very like to the one he had been picturing to his mind; for there, indeed, lay the withered blossom on her couch of death; there truly was the old man in his grief, the father in his deep despair.

How differently had that night ended to the way the old man had expected it would have done. He had returned with a heart filled with hope and joy, for he thought the news he brought would have filled with hope and joy poor Lillia's heart; but, alas! that very news gave the last blow to the frail stem on which her life rested—it snapped, and the blossom fell withered—dead!

The moment Anne had left the old man with his child, he once more took her in his arms, and kissed her fondly; he gazed at her sweet face; the bloom upon her cheeks appeared to contradict the fears Osborne had expressed; so with a joyous smile, he sat beside the bed, soon to be that of death, and began to recount the unlooked-for success he had met with in his application to the Court—"Oh, Lillia, how happy we shall be!" said the old man to his child; "all my troubles, all my cares are now for ever passed. I am wealthy, Lillia, doubly wealthy, for I have thee as well as gold. See here," he said, as he took forth some official looking documents—"this is a deed that restores to me all my former wealth; this is a commission in our new king's service—this—but these are things I can shew you to-morrow, dear, for now it is growing late, and rest will do you far more good than the prattling of an old man's tongue."

"No, do not leave me yet," said Lillia, "for I shall never sleep again until I have told you a secret, father, the only one I have ever kept from you. And now, if indeed we are rich——" a blush came over her features, for she thought of him she loved; the scene in the ruined chapel rose up in her mind, and seemed to rob her of the little hope she had been endeavouring to foster in her heart. At last, after hesitating more than once, she said—"It is of Walter Lerue——"

"Walter Lerue!" exclaimed the old man, not waiting for Lillia to finish her sentence; "may Heaven's blessings light upon him! Would

you believe it, Lillia, but it is true, dear child, that to Walter Lerue, the poor artist, who seemed scarcely able to pay the simple charges of our Inn, to him it is I owe all my present happiness. No friend had I to state my wrongs to those; by whom alone those wrongs could be redressed, and I was on the point of returning in despair, when suddenly I was summoned to the Palace of Whitehall; there I met my benefactor; he placed in my hands these papers—then hurried from me before I knew their worth—before I could offer him my thanks.”

When poor Lillia heard her father's words she burst into tears; for now hope once more took firm hold upon her heart; could he love another, and do all this for her poor father? No; she must have been mistaken; her overwrought love must have blinded her reason; thus did she think, and for a moment she was happy.

“But stranger than all,” said the old man, “was the discovery I soon after made; for I found that this same Walter Lerue was no other but the heir to the great Earl of Shrewsbury, young Lord George Talbot. What ails you, child?” exclaimed the father; “heavens, your face has become deadly pale! Speak, speak, Lillia, Lillia, speak!” He clasped her in his arms; she made several efforts as if to find something that lay near her heart; she drew forth her hand, and flung from it a flower—it was Lerue's first offering, and had ever since been treasured in her breast. She made two or three convulsive efforts to throw her arms round her father's neck—one deep-drawn sigh that seemed as though it was her soul taking its flight to Heaven—and she was dead!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

His sleep, his meat, his drink has him bereft,
That lean he wax'd, and dry as is a shaft;
His eyes hollow, and grisly to behold;
His hue fallow, and pale as ashes cold;
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his moan.

CHAUCER.

WHEN Flora returned to the parlour, she found the merchant and Alyce vying with each other in praise of Lerue. Alyce looked upon him as being so remarkably clever, so amiable, and above all so handsome; the merchant was principally taken by his superior bearing, and extraordinary openness of manner; he said—“I do declare so open is he, that were he to put a mask on his face, I should be able to see through it.”

Flora, as may be supposed, upon hearing this, gave the Bridge-shooter a sly look, and said—“Most men, I've been told, master, wear a disguise of some sort all through their lives, although they wear no masks; and keep their true feelings hid from the world, by clothing them in a thick veil of false words.”

“Heyday!” exclaimed the merchant; “why, Flora, you surely have been studying philosophy of the old woman, your aunt, eh?”

“There's many an old woman,” replied Flora, “a better philosopher



than you men, and can see much quicker through a millstone, than any of the proud lords of the creation can ; common sense and a quick eye, make the best philosopher, whether in man or maid, old or young."

"Well," replied the merchant, laughing, "as I know you possess both those great requisites, in an eminent degree, and as my eye is only quick in detecting a rogue when he would give me a yard for an ell of broad-cloth, and as I have but just sufficient common sense to know that honesty is the best policy, I think the most philosophical thing I can do, will be, instead of continuing a combat in which I know I shall be beaten, to cry you mercy, my petticoat philosopher, and go to sleep ; an art in which I am a great proficient."

As the rest of the family retired, Flora and the Bridge-shooter made an excuse, something about wishing to put the place a little in order before they went to rest, and then, being alone, the two drew their seats up close to the bright wood fire, that was sparkling and cracking joyously upon the hearth, and began to discuss matters both private and public, not only as regarded themselves, but, also, such as pertained to those around them. The first subject upon which they both appeared equally anxious to enter, was that in which Lerue held a most conspicuous place.

"Oh, you men, you men!" said Flora, shaking her head at the Bridge-shooter, and then letting her eyes fall sadly upon the hearth, as if in deep reflection ; "heigho, heigho, heigho!—you're all alike—you're all alike—I'm afraid, you're all alike!" and down went her eyes a second time.

The Bridge-shooter for a moment looked quite amazed, for he could not guess why she should shake her head at him, or why she should say he was like every other man, when she had so often told him, that in her eyes, no other man in the world was ever like him. So, not knowing exactly what to say, he allowed his arm to creep gently round her waist, which act she seemed to be perfectly unconscious of, and then taking one of her hands in his, let his eyes fall in the same direction as hers, and remained silent. Presently, they both leant slowly forward, their two heads nearly touching, they mutually inspected something lying amongst the burnt embers upon the hearth ; then again rising—"It certainly is," said Flora.

"I was thinking so myself," replied the Bridge-shooter, and down went their heads again for a second examination.

Flora, possessing, as she certainly did, a very pretty little foot, naturally employed the said pretty little foot to poke about the ashes, and the Bridge-shooter as naturally caught hold of the pretty little foot with his hand, to prevent her burning herself ; having placed this pretty little foot quite out of danger, he caught up the cause of their wonder, but it proving rather hot, he let it go again, observing that "a fool would have burnt his fingers ;" having made this assertion, his pride would not allow him to confess how much his own smarted. Taking an old-fashioned pair of tongs, which, by-the-by, were new fashioned then, he lifted the glittering prize upon the table.

"I could have sworn it was," said Flora.

"And so could I," rejoined the Bridge-shooter.

"It sparkled so," continued she.

"That's what made me notice it at first," replied he.

Then both again putting their heads close together, and their noses almost upon the object that lay before them—"Why, it's a costly jewel!" exclaimed Flora, taking up the magnificent bauble; when after examining it for scarcely a moment, her teeth began to chatter in her head, and seizing William's arm with a strong, but trembling grasp, she pushed away the jewel with her other hand, and muttered, in a subdued tone, "she said we should hear more of him anon."

"Who said so?" enquired the Bridge-shooter, quite alarmed at Flora's strange manner; "and whom mean you by *him*?"

"Your mother said it," replied Flora, her eyes riveted upon the jewel; "your mother forewarned you, and by *him*, she meant——"

"The murdered knight!" chimed in William; "but what has that trinket to do with him?"

"'Twas his," replied Flora; "I should have remembered it amongst a thousand. It was I who clasped it round the neck of our Mistress Alyce, on the fatal day when I first guessed at the knight's false intentions. But how could it have come here, and in yon fire too?"

"If it be really the same," said the Bridge-shooter, "it would, I suppose, be uncharitable for us to imagine, that from where he may now be, fire was the only agent he had at his command to send it by. But you must be mistaken, Flora—I'm sure you must. Why, it is years since you saw the real one, and then only for a day."

"But there were circumstances," replied Flora, "circumstances which arose from out that sparkling gem, that caused too many a heart to ache, for us soon to forget the cause; that is the same, I am assured, or it is a false semblance sent by the spirits of good or evil, for purposes, as yet to us unknown."

The instant they allowed the idea of supernatural interference in the business, and remembered that the original owner had met with a bloody death, and then knowing the strange manner in which it had suddenly been revealed to them in the flames, fear took possession of both their hearts; they involuntarily clung together, the Bridge-shooter flattering himself that it was merely to support, and give courage to Flora; but in truth he was entirely subdued for the moment, by the almost universal superstition of the times.

Fear we believe to be the most powerful and universal of all human feelings; no one is exempt from it—no one can withstand its power: the gentle lover, the steel-clad warrior, can be alike subdued by fear. What was it that made our kings crawl grovelling in the dust, to hold the stirrup, or to kiss the dirt from off the feet of some proud angry Pope, but fear? They feared, poor simple souls, that he would shut the gates of heaven against them, or open the gates of fire and thrust them in: this, will be said, was superstition; but what is superstition but the child of fear, and the most promising child of all his progeny? the strongest sinews of the strongest man, are but as threads of glass, if touched by fear's all powerful hand. Its mode of action is like that of the electric fluid—invisible; but its effects, too, are like that—resistless.

They stood for a time, neither liking to confess that they feared to

move, gazing upon the bauble : then both took a stealthy glance around the room, as though they half-suspected the murdered knight lay lurking in some dark corner peeping at them, and ready to start up, if they dared to touch the mystic talisman, when the Bridge-shooter's eye fell upon a book, now becoming rather general in dwellings in England—it was the Bible ; he pointed to it, and Flora, who was scarcely more advanced in her state of reformation, than was the poor Bridge-shooter, started towards it, as a sure refuge against all evil spirits. She opened it half-way, and placed it as a sort of roof over the sparkling jewel. So satisfied were they now of their own safety, that Flora almost smiled at her former apprehensions.

"I think we are now secure from all ghosts or hobgoblins," she said ; "but still the mysterious appearance of that brooch, in such a place as the cottage on the Heath, and coming in such a way, surrounded by flames, is very perplexing. I almost begin to suspect, William, that the Witch of Houndsditch, although she is your mother, and may be mine one of these days, is more of a witch than our unbelieving presumptuous minds have hitherto been willing to acknowledge."

"Oh !" said William, in a most reassured tone of voice, as though the bare mention of his mother as a witch, had at once dispelled from his mind all ideas of witchcraft ; "oh ! if she has anything to do with it, believe me, we shall not be long in finding out the secret, and finding it out too, to be anything but supernatural." He peeped beneath the book—"It's there safe enough," he said ; "and to show you how little I think of mother's witcheries, see here, I'm no longer afraid to touch it."

Saying this, he lifted the book with his left hand, and took up the brooch with his right, exclaiming—"If thou be an imp of Satan come in the form of a diamond, and many an imp of Satan has come in that shape, this book will protect me ; but if thou be a real diamond——" Saying this he looked at it very closely, and suddenly changing his tone, said—"And upon my life, Flora, it is uncommonly like a real one— isn't it ?"

Flora, finding no harm had come to William, and not hearing any strange noises, such as moans and groans, or sobs or sighs, confessed it was ; and further stated her still stronger belief, that that superb diamond was the very same, and no fairy gem, which Horton said he had found, but which really had been placed in his hands by Sir Filbut Fussy. The question now came—what should they do with it ? It might bring up painful recollections to their master, were they to show it to him, and still more painful memories should Alyce see it. So for the present, they determined to let Edward Osborne alone know of the treasure they had found, and then to act according to his advice.

The mention of Edward's name, at once turned their thoughts into a different channel, so not feeling sleepy, and both having a great deal to say about him, and others in connexion with him, they once more drew their seats to the fire, and placing two or three extra logs of wood upon it, began a very cosy little chat. There was one curious circumstance, scarcely perhaps worth the mentioning, but yet we will name it, and that was, that whenever the Bridge-shooter found himself alone near

Flora, his arm always got round her waist; perhaps this is natural to lovers; if so, we have no wish that either of them should be deemed unnatural—unkind we know they were not; so we will let them sit just as they list, and merely relate what they said, without impertinently noticing what they did.

"By-the-by," observed the Bridge-shooter, "what were you thinking of, Flora, when you just now said—'Oh, these men, these men!' and shook your head at me?"

"Thinking of," replied his fair companion; "thinking of? why, of you, and all the rest of your deceitful sex; particularly of that masquerader, that pretended young painter, Master Lerue, or rather Lord Talbot: how we are to act for the best in this affair, puzzles me vastly. It is quite evident that Master Edward had no suspicion that the humble artist was one of the first nobles of our land; and it's my present opinion that we had better still leave him in ignorance; what think you?"

Now as William always thought exactly as Flora did, the question was quite superfluous on her part, for she already knew his answer before he gave it; and as she had anticipated, he replied—"Why, Flora, upon *this* subject I think exactly as you do: were we to tell all we know to the merchant, he would be mighty wrath at the trick played off upon him and his; the more so, because he would be without the power to resent the insult; if we divulge the secret to Dame Alyce, it will drive her half frantic, from alarm for the safety of her child; and for more reasons than one, our young mistress had better know nothing about it; and as to Edward—whe—w!" and the Bridge-shooter gave a long whistle; "heavens! that would end his business in a twinkling. Already has this Lerue put the match pretty near to a hidden train, reaching to a magazine stuffed with combustibles, that has long been lying in Edward's heart; a step more, and the explosion would be awful. No, no, let us wait, and, as mother beautifully expresses it, 'let us see how the cat jumps,' before we move in this business."

"But are you sure?" said Flora, as if still half doubting, "are you quite sure, that sweet Mistress Anne has at last found a way to the tender part of his stony heart?"

"Sure," replied the other, "more than sure. Where's that scrap of paper I gave you? look at that; what further proof could any reasonable being want?"

While he was speaking, Flora drew from her bosom the piece of paper the Bridge-shooter had given her in their ramble home, and which she intended to place under her pillow that night, in hope of calling up a "Dream of Love."

"Look at it," said William; "don't you see it's poetry—poetry? When a child begins to write poetry, it may be because he has been born a poet, but when a man begins to scribble rhymes, depend upon it he has suddenly found a pen made out of one of Cupid's feathers. Read it Flora—read it; and then judge for yourself whether or not Master Edward is not uncommonly far gone."

Flora, after smoothing the paper with her hand upon her knee, began to read—

THE DREAM OF LOVE.

I.

The dream of Love, that sweetest dream
 That e'er can haunt the midnight hour ;
 The young maid's hope, the poet's theme,
 The sleeper's bliss, the magic power
 That to the very soul imparts
 A thrill forgotten never more ;
 For, oh ! it brings to youthful hearts
 A feeling they ne'er felt before.
 Then of all dreams from realms above,
 Give me the dream, the dream of Love !

II.

And that sweet dream was mine to-night,
 When, oh ! how kind she looked, then sighed,
 And vowed—oh, rapture of delight !
 That soon, yes, soon she'd be my bride.
 But then it seemed she false became,
 And I was scorned, and loved no more,
 But why still weep such fancied shame ?
 The wrong is gone—the dream once o'er.
 Then of all dreams from realms above,
 Give me the dream, the dream of Love !

“ Well, what think you now ? ” enquired the Bridge-shooter ; “ I say, what think you now ? ”

“ Think,” replied Flora, still looking at the lines, “ why, I think if that he wrote this, his case is perfectly desperate—if faith I do, perfectly desperate ; and you imagine the cause of his sudden affliction, is our sweet young mistress ? ”

“ Can there be a doubt,” replied the other, “ after what we saw to-night ? Did you ever see a dog chained up, watching another at liberty and enjoying a delicate banquet, that looked more savagely envious than did poor Edward, as he eyed the gay Lerue devouring the sweet smiles of Anne ? I don't believe he has yet quite made a confident of even himself ; but love is a disease that will burst out somewhere or other, in spite of all our care : he'll be obliged to tell her yet : I wonder what she'll say when he does.”

“ Just what I said to you,” said Flora, “ don't be a fool ! ” She'll perhaps put it in different words, but that's what she'll mean ; for, alas ! I fear me, that on her part, she has thought as little of Edward, as Edward has hitherto appeared to do of her. If ever they should fall really in love with one another, I wonder what the merchant would say ; he's rather high in his notions ; and should the intentions of this Lord Talbot prove more honest than I suspect them to be, would he, or would she, have courage to say him nay ? ”

“ If I were Master Edward,” said the Bridge-shooter, “ I'd be before hand with him, I know ; for he ought to remember that at that little shop called a young lady's heart, it's generally, ‘ first come first served ; ’ and if he could only take all her stock of love off her hands, the next comer might go elsewhere for what he wanted. Is there no way we could bring it about ? Couldn't you abuse him dreadfully to her ; find

out all sorts of pretended faults ; it's a seldom-failing method of making young people discover all kinds of virtues."

"I think the best thing we can do," observed Flora, giving herself a slight shake, "is to find out our way to rest ; for if we continue to talk in this way, it will be morning before we say good night. I'm very tired, but I have a thousand things to say, about the Cripple and Eoline, and I know not what ; but for to-night, William, fare thee well !"

What else they said, or did, we do not feel bound to record, further than to say that the Bridge-shooter as he ascended to his room, muttered something to himself about—"He'd not stand it much longer ; and if she liked him she ought to marry him ; and that in the morning he would come to some fixed determination upon the subject—that he would !"

Flora having carefully placed the song beneath her pillow, fell into a delightful dream of Love, and in it she fancied she saw Master Hewet in his barge on the Thames, dressed as Lord Mayor ; and what appeared still grander in her eyes, there stood William magnificently attired in coat-and-badge, as Master of the Lord Mayor's barge. She always regarded herself as a most fatal dreamer ; time will shew whether or not her dream of this night became verified.

We must now for a moment glance into another apartment of the cottage, that belonging to Edward Osborne ; he had been sitting before the fire, exactly over the very spot where Flora and the Bridge-shooter had been conversing so long in the room below ; and as they were thinking how they could bring about a love affair between Osborne and the lovely Anne, he was racking his mind to find out an escape from the snare he believed he had constructed to catch himself—"Why have I now," he said, "opened my eyes to all those matchless charms, against which I have for years, nay, from her infancy, kept my heart from the knowledge of their excellence, by closing my soul's eyes. Is it love ? is it envy ? What is it that I feel now eating away my very mind ? Do what I will ; say what I will ; think what I will ; still there is the one impulse to every—the one prompter of my words—the one engrossing spirit of my every thought—and that one is Anne. Why have I never allowed such thoughts to invade my mind before ? Was she less fair before that upstart Lerue discovered her angelic grace ? was she less kind before he——no—I cannot bear the thought that she has been kind to him. She was always so to me ; but then I valued not that kindness, because I was fool enough to wait until a stranger should school me in the knowledge of its inestimable worth ; and now, like the spendthrift who has squandered away all that might have brought him happiness for a whole life, I feel, when perhaps it is too late, the bitter wretchedness of my self-wrought poverty. Am I deformed, unsightly, a fool, an idiot ? It is no great stretch of vanity to say I'm none of these : then why should not I have entered the lists, with at least as much courage to combat for the prize as others will do, and, alas ! I fear, that one has already done. I watched them both ; his were the looks of a well-practised, seldom-resisted profligate ; he is one who has the courage to ask ; and to such, I fear me much, few are found who have the courage to deny. If then to ask is to have, why have my eyes never yet learned the beggar's trade ?"

Saying this, he turned his glance upon a mirror, but more quickly turned away again, such a woful failure had he made, in an attempt to look as languishingly as he fancied he had seen Lerue do, when gazing at the lovely Anne.

"No," he said, "practice may make deceit still more deceitful, but never can make truth more true; and yet I feel, dead as these orbs are within their hollow graves, one glance from hers would kindle them to life; and were but her heart to shine from out her eyes, oh, with what rapture would this poor heart fly through my own to meet it!"

Had Osborne gazed upon himself at that moment, he would have had no cause to have doubted his power of throwing his soul into his face. He had so wrought upon his own feelings, that he fancied for a moment that Anne was really near him, and heard the empassioned words he uttered. For her own peace of mind, unless she could willingly reciprocate his feelings, perhaps it was as well she was not there, for few tender hearts can resist true enthusiasm, at least, until reflection, with its icy hand withdraws the dazzling medium, through which such hearts have viewed the magic scene.

Poor Edward looked around the room; every object he there saw lowered him one more step from the exalted pinnacle on which, for an instant, he had set his thoughts. There stood his little bed half uncovered, inviting him to repose; there an icy ledge, bidding him turn over a new leaf, and think of business; the fire, too, began to wane and flicker. But dare we tell his last act of weakness, ere he sought repose?—we will, for it was fraught with kindness, if not with wisdom. The reader is aware, from a former visit to Osborne's sleeping-room, that there was but a slight partition between his own and Anne's dormitory. He knew her bed stood close against it—we almost blush to tell the simple fancy of his heart—but after a fervent prayer for her he no longer to himself attempted to deny he loved, he kissed the panel near which he knew her head was lying. Whether it were truth, or mere imagination, we know not, but he himself arose enraptured, for in his fancy that kiss had been answered by a sigh. Trifle as this was, it caused him to fall into a happier, far happier state of repose than he had enjoyed for nights and nights before.

Had the charm which Flora placed under her own pillow an effect universal? It seemed so; for not an inmate of that dwelling but upon this particular night enjoyed a Dream of Love! Alyce, the gentle Alyce, in sleep's resistless spell, was once again in youth, the loved, adored young bride of the handsome merchant of the Bridge. She fancied herself, as we have described her to have been in the earliest chapter of our romance, standing at the casement, viewing the passing maypole; and once more felt the blushes suffuse her face, as when the morris dancers had singled her out as beauty's queen: again she saw the admiring crowds gazing upon the infant beauty of her child; but what seemed more than all to her, was the gentle pressure of a loving husband's arm, as it supported her, and the kind, but proud smile with which that husband gazed upon his soul's idol, herself, his own sweet Alyce; hers was indeed a Dream of Love.

Eolino's visions were but the continuation of her daily dream; for all

who live in blindness, must ever live in dreams, at least regarding things material. Imagination had built an idol in her heart unalterable : age had no power to wither the roses she had pictured in his cheek ; care could not blanch it with his ashy hand. What first she pictured, still to the last she saw ; if seeing with the mind can be called sight.

At the same hour of night, the Cripple and herself had dreamt of that night's same hour, which made them one ; and theirs was a Dream of Love.

Poor Flora never dreamt of anything but love ; nor did her swain, her own sweet William ; therefore theirs, forsooth, must have been Dreams of Love.

But what did lovely Anne dream of that night ? First, she dreamt of her mother, and her, we know, she loved ; next of her sire, and no love was lacking there ; her vision now seemed wandering far and wide, o'er heath and dale, o'er copse and glade ; but see, 'tis resting now upon a poor old man, seated by a little child ; he kisses it, and seems to love it for its helplessness : its face is like a mirror in which she sees her own—the child has vanished—and now the old man's head she feels is resting upon her breast ; her arms are round his neck ; she loves him for the love he gave to her, when none were near to love her but himself. In truth, youth turns to age, but in her dream, age turned to youth. She saw a kind of lists, arrayed as if for a jousting ; and many a gallant youth was there, smiling, and full of hope. Lords were there, and decked in gaudy pride ; the game to play was running at the ring. Around and round they pranced, but none could yet carry away the ring upon his lance ; one had an unlucky fall, and when his helmet was removed, she saw the features of Leruc. On went the game, the worsted knight forgotten ; but still none ever caught the ring ; when presently a youth, but humble in attire, seemed as if risen from the earth ; for no announcement had there been of his approach ; he came modestly to try his power of eye, and steadiness of aim. Gently, at first he took the space around, but suddenly, as if he had seen the prize he was to strive for, he put spurs to his steed, and soon was passing all competitors. Observing, with a smile, the awkward failures his opponents made, he thrust his hand into his breast, and drawing forth his heart, placed it on his lance, and thus oddly armed, at the next round, bore off the ring in triumph. But what seemed strangest to Anne, of all this strange dream, was that the prize so many aimed at was nothing but her own fair hand, which now she saw start up where late the ring had been. She trembled in her sleep : who could the victor be ? The helmet was removed—the winner of her hand was—Edward Osborne. She heaved a deep-drawn sigh, and then awoke ; was that the sigh he really heard ? And was not hers a scream of love ?

CHAPTER XXIX..

And have well founden by experience,
 That dreames be significations.
 As well of joy, as tribulations,
 That folk enduren in this life present.
 There needeth make of this no argument.

CHAUCER.

THERE are few people, be they never so wise, who have not one time or another suffered their better sense to be led captive for awhile, by the recollections of a dream, and many a day has been rendered one of sadness or of joy, by the waking mind still clinging to the vision of the previous night. This was very powerfully exemplified in the case of the lovely Anne. She smiled at her own folly, as she called it, for thinking a second time of the nonsense of a dream; but strange to say, the more she endeavoured to banish the recollection from her mind, the more tenaciously would her thoughts hold on to the forbidden there. It was very odd, but it was very true, that on the morrow, while all else were recounting some portions of their sleeping reveries, Anne alone was silent; perhaps she believed her own wild fancy of the midnight hour too absurd to be related; be that as it might, she certainly did not once touch upon the subject.

"Well," said Flora, "people may talk as they like about dreams, but I've known many and many a one come true; and I hope mine may; and then Master Hewet will be Lord Mayor of London town, and I shall see William, there, as gay as a robin red breast, with scarlet coat and glittering badge, lording it over the twenty rowers of the golden barge."

"And if ever I be Lord Mayor," replied Hewet, "William shall assuredly be my head bargeman, and shoot me — don't start, my Alyce dear, but shoot me he shall, not through the brain, but through the Bridge, just to prove he has not forgotten his old trade."

The merchant laughed heartily at his own miserable attempt at a joke, and all present for the moment seemed happy. No, there were two who although they compelled themselves to smile, did it so badly that it had better been left undone; these were Anne and Osborne. Flora, who was in a rather teasing humour, observing Edward's melancholy look, said — "Why, Master Edward, you really seem still in a dream; if so, let us hope it is *'the dream of Love, that sweetest dream, that ever haunts the midnight hour!'*"

Before half a dozen words had been pronounced, poor Osborne's face was all on fire. Why, those were the very words he had been repeating to himself half the live-long night; and words, too, that he believed he had himself written. Had he done as many a would-be poet has done before, taken another's thoughts, while thinking them his own?

Flora saw the confusion she had caused in Edward's mind, and cruelly pursued her sudden mischievous fancy — "Yes," she said, "what a beautiful *old* song that is; it's *very* old, but that makes it not less to be

admired." Every time she used the word *old*, a new blush came upon Edward's face. The Bridge-shooter, too, made horrible contortions by winking, and other little secret hints to Flora, to desist, but all to no purpose; on she would go—"I'll repeat the whole of it, although I have not heard it for *many a year*." Saying this, and not waiting for consent from any one, she went through the entire of Edward's first poetical effusion.

As she came to the last line, he could bear it no longer, so starting up left the room; he hurried to his own; he seized his writing-case, and nearly broke the lock in his anxiety to open it. He became more and more perplexed, for there he found his treasure safe in its hiding-place—"Well," he said, "is it possible that my memory should be so good as to retain another's words, and yet so bad as to forget they were another's? It cannot be; and yet she repeated every word, every syllable as I have set it down here on this paper now before me." Again locking the case, he once more descended to the lower room, determined to take the first opportunity of solving the mystery, by speaking openly upon the subject when he should find Flora alone.

It had been settled on the previous night, that the merchant and the Bridge-shooter should return to London in the morning, leaving Edward at the cottage, to attend upon his former friend, the Cripple, who for certain reasons was to be kept out of sight, until matters should be more matured.

Osborne was delighted with the arrangement, for as yet he had not been made acquainted with all the strange causes that had brought the Cripple once more to England, and had placed him beneath the roof of him the Cripple had formerly held in detestation.

As the merchant intended to go by water, it was settled that Anne should accompany her father as far as the Ferry, being anxious to hear tidings of her young suffering friend, for as yet she knew not of Lillia's death.

As Osborne was to go with them, in order to escort her home again, the Cripple, who was as anxious to tell Edward all that had befallen him and his adored Eoline, as Edward was to hear the tale, determined to stroll along with them.

"Wonders will never cease, Master Edward," said the Cripple, "never, never! You must have been strangely surprised to have found the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower a guest of Master Hewet—were you not?"

"That I was surprised to see you at the Cottage of the Heath, I cannot deny," replied young Osborne; "but that you should one day become the merchant's guest, I never expected would surprise me; for I knew his goodness and your good sense, and that time would remove whatever prejudices you had unjustly—for I was sure it would prove unjust—built up in your mind against him: but what first brought about the change?"

"An angel," replied the Cripple, "a child of earth, but with a mind of heaven—Eoline."

"As you yourself have broached the subject," said Osborne; "tell me, Willy, what was your first cause of hatred to the merchant?"

"This misshapen trunk," replied the Cripple, looking down upon his own deformity; "this, and a father's and a mother's death. I believed I owed all three to him; and all I panted for was the revenge of placing his head upon the Bridge-gate-tower. Often used I to picture to myself, when goaded to madness by the insult and mockery of the crowd, how I would one day laugh, as I danced around the withering head of him who had caused my wrongs. I was then a monster in mind as well as form, until the ray of Heaven shed its softening light upon my darkened soul, brought to it by the gentlest heart that ever beat within a mortal's breast. The moment I found a thing to love me, I was another being. What cared I for other's beauties! I was *beloved*—what else would I be? From that moment one third of my hatred of Master Hewet found its grave. My deformities I had forgiven, for in spite of them I was *beloved*."

"But what mean you, Willy," enquired Osborne, "by laying to the merchant's charge your difference in form to other men?"

"It were a sad tale, and a long, did I tell you all; but, to the end at once, and then you'll quickly feel why I should have held the merchant in such hate. The fiends who blasphemously called themselves the preachers of Christ's mercies, condemned my father to the flames, because his conscience saw not with eyes like theirs: he had read—had felt that God asked for thoughts, not words; that God demanded the prostration of our inward souls, not the mere bending of our outward bodies; that he was to be propitiated by penitence before himself, not by the intercession of some painted doll. For thoughts like these, he was condemned—for words like these he suffered. I see in your looks the question you would ask—I'll answer it unasked. I was ever taught by the poor demented being I called my mother, that merchant Hewet was the sole cause of our undoing. I know the error now, but of that anon; you cannot guess why I should lay at the merchant's door the cause of my deformity? I'll tell you, why I did so. It was by those nearest to me believed, that from information given by William Hewet, then a mere boy, that my father was condemned for *Heresy*. Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he!" and the old malignant chuckling laugh, for once was again heard; for once again his thoughts were carried back to the time, when his only solace lay in the contempt with which he tried to laugh at all his more favoured fellow creatures. "*Heresy, heresy!*" and he repeated the word still more bitterly; "know you the meaning of the word, young Master Edward? if not, I'll tell you. *HERESY* is in the *not* thinking as those think who are in power; gain but the power to *punish*, and then all are heretics who think not like yourself. Oh! power, power! how wondrous religious does it make us in our own conceit! Now mark the difference a few years have made; my father was deemed to be a child of Satan, and to Satan's fiery home was sent, as they believed, through fire; had he still lived he had now been almost worshiped as a saint, for he was truly good. All the arts that artful priests could bring to bear upon his health, his mind, his human feelings, were employed to bend him to their will; but all in vain: long was he kept in prison—starved—then tempted by all the promised luxuries that could tempt a starving man; but still his firmness failed him not.

The last hope to subdue him was my mother ; they had not long been married ; she loved my father as her life ; his life was naught to him, compared to the love he felt for her ; but his conviction in regard to the great TRUTH, was mightier than all his worldly hopes. Now came the last, the fatal scene. It was enacted in that place of fire, of torture, and of blood, Smithfield. There stood the pulpit, from which naught but charity and peace to all mankind should ever flow, but now erected to sanction the tortures of earthly flames, and to send to flames eternal, were it in the power of man to do so, the upright soul of one, who merely differed in outward form of worship of that God, whom he and his accusers both knelt before, and called all-merciful. When all else had failed to shake my poor father, in this dreadful moment of earthly trial, what did the mis-called *holy* fiends do then ? they brought his wife, my mother soon to be, the idol of his heart, the bliss or anguish of his every thought—they brought her to him while fastened to the stake—they forced her on her knees to pray of him to save his life, by renouncing, what they called his damning heresy ; and when this last, this horrid attempt to subdue affrighted nature, failed, they placed a burning brand within her grasp, and then by force compelled the wife to fire the fatal pile, that was to consume in tortures her heart's adored—her husband. I have been told that at the first trial, the very faggots seemed, as by miracle, to refuse to burn ; but the monster who had the welcome work in charge, soon subdued their obstinacy, by guiding her hand to those substances the most inflammable ; the smoke ascended ; the flames at last burst forth ; and amidst the cries of agony of a dying father, and the shrieks of a mother maddened by her anguish, I was untimely born !”

As the poor Cripple had advanced more and more in his dreadful narrative, slower had become his pace ; Edward and he were now alone, and as he uttered the last words, he buried his head upon Osborne's shoulder and wept aloud.

After he had somewhat recovered, he looked down upon his misshapen limbs, then turning to Edward, said—“ Could I look upon these deformities, without remembering the dreadful cause that brought such a monster upon earth. I had always been led to believe that the merchant had been the denouncer of my father, and by that denunciation the digger of a mother's early grave. Every insult that an unfeeling world heaped upon me, engendered in my heart another drop of bitter gall, to poison my mind against Master Hewet. But I was wrong, as all are who foster hate. The merchant had never wronged me or mine ; this was by chance made clear to me by the Abbess of St. Clair.”

At the mention of the Abbess, Edward stopped the Cripple in his narration, to ask concerning her fate ; for strange to say, so full had his mind been upon other subjects, more near to his own heart, and so little had been the opportunities, as yet, of entering fully into the strange cause of the Cripple's sudden and unexpected appearance in England, that hitherto her name had not been mentioned ; but now it led to all that Osborne had still to learn.

It appeared that when Spikely had been found amongst the dead, and had been, as the reader is aware, taken to the dwelling of the Cripple, he had, when he believed himself upon the point of death, made a con-

fession to the Abbess, of things of great importance to Eoline: amongst others he divulged, but this he did more out of hate towards Horton, than from a wish to serve the wronged, that Horton had stolen the documents that alone could prove the rights of Eoline, whatever they might be.

"And, think of our surprise," said the Cripple, "to discover, concealed in the very mattress upon which we had conveyed Eoline to the ship, years ago, the treasure which the Abbess alone knew the value of, and which she had believed was for ever lost. Who the wounded soldier was, he never would disclose, or how he came to the knowledge which was of such worth to us. The instant he had recovered sufficiently to leave his couch, he departed from our house, and since that time we never heard more concerning him."

"Then it is to prosecute Eoline's claim," enquired Edward, "that has brought you here? but who and what is she then? She was always regarded as a poor orphan, kept at the convent out of charity."

Before the Cripple could reply, they heard a great shouting, from a crowd assembled in the little market-place, for they had now entered the town.

"What is the matter?" enquired the merchant, of one of the bystanders.

"Oh, no great matter," replied the man; "only Master Blaze, the smith, going to sell a beggar; that is, if such a fool can be found as to buy such a lump of useless lumber; why, he's too old for anything but to eat." This the man said very loud, as if to depreciate the value of the article. "Why there is such a crowd, do ye see, is because this is the first beggar that has been sold since the passing of the act; there won't be many beggars soon, but there'll be lots of slaves." Then, in a whisper, he said, "I mean to buy him if I can."

"Then you want to prove there is one fool great enough to buy such a lump of useless lumber?" said the Bridge-shooter.

"Ah! but I want him for a fancy of my own," replied the fellow. "You see, my master, I'm a man of impulse—and so is my wife—that is, I mean, she's a woman of impulse; and when I'm cross, and when she's cross, we both feel that we must bang somebody. Now, if I bang her, she bangs me in return, and that's a game at which I'm sure to lose—or rather win—if getting more than I give, is to be called winning; so you see, my master, as the law allows us to beat our slaves if they won't work, and as I'm sure he *can't* work, it struck me that he'd be just the thing, as a sort of off-let to our ill humours, and will enable us to live as lovingly together as—as—but here he comes, and now for the fun." •

As the fellow said this, he started off nearer to the spot where a sort of large table had been placed, and upon which the smith, the worthy Master Blaze, immediately mounted, attended by the same official whom Osborne had seen before in the smithy.

This official, or tip-staff, read in a loud voice, the new act—"Statute I, Edward VI., c. 3, laying great emphasis upon the words, which empowered the master to *sell*, bequeath, let out for hire, or give the service of their slaves to any person whomsoever, upon such conditions, and for

such term of years, as the said persons be adjudged to them for slaves, after the like sort and manner as they may do of any other of their moveable goods or chattels."

The legal document having been read, Master Blaze began a long speech about the wonderful qualities of the human being he had to sell, "industry, willingness, and never-to-be-subdued strength," were but the faintest of the brilliant virtues possessed by the worthy creature he had to offer to their notice. On run his tongue, till the bystanders began to shew symptoms of weariness, and, in fact, called loudly to see the lot. When the bondsman did appear, a roar of laughter ensued, for instead of looking upon a perfect Hercules in strength—an Adonis in beauty, the crowd beheld the same poor old man whom Osborne had saved from ill-usage, by a large bribe to the smith.

Anne, who until that moment had not looked towards the disgusting scene, now raised her eyes, and suddenly clinging to her father's arm, exclaimed—"Gracious Heavens! 'tis the poor old man!—father, father, 'tis he!"

"Whom mean you, child?" enquired the merchant, not comprehending why she could be thus suddenly moved.

"'Tis he, I say! 'tis, 'tis he!" she repeated, still more agitated than before.

"I know him not," said the merchant.

"But I do," replied Anne, and then, as if half choking to find words to explain her meaning, she exclaimed—" 'tis the—the—old devil!" for that one instant her whole mind had flown back to her childhood's miseries. She saw before her the only being who had made those miseries endurable; she would have sprang forward to have embraced her never-to-be-forgotten saviour, had not the merchant held her back.

"Hush," whispered her father; "be calm; all will be well yet."

What a strange mixture of bewildering thought now flew through Anne's excited mind, as she gazed upon the poor old man, mounting upon the platform; the last few years had seemed to add an age to his former venerable mien. His locks were thinner, and whiter too; his steps were far more tottering than they were, when last she had seen him turning away, as she lay concealed in the Tybourn Tree, and had then heard his feeble voice calling upon Heaven to bless her. Not an incident of that miserable eventful portion of her life, but now stood before her mind in all the vivid colouring of a frightful dream.

The merchant himself could not resist a powerful emotion, that seemed to fly from his very heart into his throat. He, too, was in his mind looking upon a scene of years gone by; that scene of bliss, wherein he beheld his long-lost child, as by a miracle, restored to his longing arms. The very words he had then uttered, upon hearing that to this poor old man he had owed the restoration of his child, now flew to his tongue, and he once again exclaimed, "God's blessing light on him! he shall be happy, if wealth can make him so!"

He whispered something into the ear of the Cripple, who, mixing with the crowd, approached very near to the platform, or rather heavy table. For some time no bidding was offered, until the man to whom the mer-

chant and the Bridge-shooter had talked, appeared to think the proper moment had arrived to secure a bargain, offered a hundred pence.

The Cripple, to Anne's delight, now offered double. The crowd, seeing the strange figure of the last bidder, began to jeer and laugh; and one, more impudent than the rest, repeated his words, and then his limping gait; upon which the Cripple placed his iron grasp behind the fellow's neck, and then, with resistless force, sent him sprawling at full length amongst the crowd at the other side of the open space about the platform. The laugh now was turned upon the discomfited jester, and then the sale proceeded.

There were but two bidders—the man with the dreaded wife, and the Cripple. The smith, seeing the determination of the Cripple to have the slave, gave a knowing wink to the first bidder, whom he knew right well; and this being taken as it was intended, up ran the biddings, until the man, beginning to be fearful that he might have misunderstood the smith's wink, and thus be saddled with a bargain the wrong way, at last refused to bid on, and the Cripple thus became the purchaser.

"For what have you bought me?" said the old man, as the Cripple took hold of the iron chain, which was attached to the ring around his neck; "for what have you bought me at this fearful price? I'm old and weak—I can't work—I only wish to die."

"I've bought you for a lady's toy," replied the Cripple, smiling, "and for one who could, an' she would, make a thousand better men than you or I her slaves; and that you'll own, when you shall see your mistress."

The Bridge-shooter now advanced, bringing the merchant's purse.

The money being paid—the receipt lawfully drawn out—and then a handful of small coin being thrown amongst the crowd, a scramble ensued, in the midst of which the Cripple, unnoticed, bore away his purchase.

The old man eyed with astonishment the Cripple as he led him away by the chain, as men were then accustomed to lead about the dancing bears; but his astonishment was a thousand times augmented, when turning into a secluded spot, a lovely girl sprang forward, and throwing her arms around his neck, kissed him with all the affection of a child. He held her from him, as if bewildered; he gazed upon her lovely face; he looked around as asking a solution of this dream-like scene; but he soon felt that no dream was there, when Anne exclaimed—"Grandfather, grandfather, have you indeed forgotten little Anne, the child you loved—the child you saved at Tybourne Tree? Look at me! I am older now: altered I must be, since you know me not—altered in all, but in the feelings of gratitude towards you, the poor child's only friend!"

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, "and have my prayers been heard; and do my old eyes once again gaze upon the poor wronged thing, that I so loved—so often prayed to see once more?"

"'Tis I, indeed, grandfather," replied Anne; "and here stands my real father, him of whom I used to tell such tales about, when I thought he was no father to poor Anne; and here is Edward, too: you remember Edward. Oh, yes, you must remember him; for don't you recollect, I used to tell you how kind he had always been to me; and had saved my

life ; and—but you must remember him ; and here is the Bridge-shooter, who taught Edward to swim, and thus to rescue me ; and this is the—I mean Willy of the Bridge-gate-tower, that we used to talk about so much.

The old man looked from one to the other, as Anne pronounced their names, but seemed completely lost ; then fixing his eyes intently upon her face, began to examine every feature—"Yes, yes," he at last exclaimed, "it is, it is the poor wronged child, the little Anne that I so loved !"

It was soon explained to him why he had been purchased ; and the ring was speedily removed from around his neck.

The merchant now told him that for years he had been endeavouring to discover the protector, the saviour of his darling child ; and that having, as by a miracle, at last found him, he should no more want a protector, or a home.

He was now placed under the care of the Cripple, to convey him up to the Cottage on the Heath. The merchant's affairs compelling him to hasten to London, he, with the Bridge-shooter, hurried to the Ferry, as Anne, after taking a kind farewell of her newly-found old friend, placed her arm within that of Edward, and then, with a light step and a lighter heart, proceeded towards the little Inn.

The joy she felt, at the discovery she had just made, was, alas ! of short duration, for the closed Ferry-house told her too plainly the tale of death. The people about the place informed her, that from the moment Lillia had died, her father had not spoken a single word ; that the village doctor had ordered no one to disturb him in his sorrow ; and had further stated that so powerfully had the shock acted upon his mind and frame, that unless nature received some speedy relief, from a source beyond the power of earthly skill, the same grave would, in all probability, close upon both the father and the child.

Anne wept bitterly at hearing this sad account of her she had loved with a sister's love, the poor Lilly of the inn.—"Oh, Edward!" she exclaimed, as they began slowly to retrace their steps towards their home, "this world seems made up of disappointment and of sorrow ; the few happy moments permitted to poor mortals, are even at their birth robbed of half their brightness, from the too well-grounded fear, that ere they can be fairly siezed on, the dark cloud that is ever rolling in their wake, will overtake, and with its shadow dim all their promised lustre. How happy the discovery of my old grandfather, as I used to call him in my days of suffering, had now made me, but for this sad, sad event !"

Edward would willingly have given the sweet girl by his side some little consolation, if he could, but so full of melancholy was his own mind, that all he said rendered her still more wretched.

"Let us not hurry home, Edward," said Anne, as they came to a road that turned to the upper part of the heath ; "for I would not carry my sadness there ; and after a time I shall be more myself : let us stroll through this lovely lane, and do you tell me something, anything, to change my present unhappy thoughts."

"I am but in a poor mood," replied Osborne, "to talk cheerfully, for my whole thoughts are bent upon a subject, that when you shall learn

the end to which it leads, I think you will own that I have cause for being unhappy."

"What cause can you have, Edward, that your sister knows not of?"

As she pronounced the word *sister*, Osborne involuntarily bit his lip, and then pointedly replied—"If a *sister* had ever been kind, ever devoted to a *brother*, should not that brother feel a bitter pang, if he found that fate had made it necessary that they should part for ever?"

"What mean you, dear Edward?" exclaimed Anne, his words filling her with surprise; "surely, such a speech as that cannot apply to us!"

"Alas, too truly, does it!" continued young Osborne, turning aside, not daring to trust himself to gaze upon her, while he revealed his intention. "Anne," he said, "I have been long wishing to ask your advice—nay, not that—for when the mind is determined, it were useless to seek advice; but I have wished to tell you the plans I have formed for my future life. Do not be surprised at, nor for the present divulge to mortal, what I shall now tell you. You know the great interest your good father possesses abroad amongst the merchants there. I have discovered that ere long the manager of the English Factory at Antwerp, will leave that station, and 'tis my intention to solicit it, through your father's means. It will be a bitter parting when I leave all I ever loved, to seek my fortune in a foreign land; but, since my mind has taken a turn, unknown to all but myself, I feel it would prove, oh, far more bitter still, were I to remain! Do not ask me the cause of this determination, for I will never breathe the secret to mortal ear: do not attempt to persuade me to alter my fixed resolve; it would but add another pang, without even shaking my now firmly-rooted intention. When I do leave England—it will be for ever."

So unlooked for was the revelation she had heard, that for a moment, the astonished girl could not utter a word; and when she did she scarcely knew what she said.

"Oh, Edward, Edward!" at last she exclaimed; "were not your words too cruel for a jest, I would not, could not think you serious. Leave us! your home! your country! and for ever!—impossible! What says my father to this wild, this unfeeling scheme?"

"As yet, he knows not of my wishes," replied Edward, "and the only reason I have for doubting the wisdom of my plan, is the disinclination, the almost dread I have of disclosing it to him. He will ask my reasons, and he is the last on earth that I would reveal them to."

"Reveal them, then, to me!" ejaculated Anne, as she gazed imploringly into his eyes, as though she would through them read the secret of his inmost soul; "confide all your cares, all your sorrows to me; for I fear you have cares, and sorrows too, Edward, that we little dream of."

"Whatever they may be, Anne," he replied, "and I own I have troubles; but they are such, that none but he that suffers beneath their weight, can ever comprehend the pangs that they inflict."

"Then they are troubles of the mind," she replied, "the weightiest of all to bear; we have had a sad proof of this, but now."

"What mean you?" enquired Osborne.

"You know, dear Edward, that unlike you, *I* never keep a secret, at least from you, my brother." Osborne groaned. "The poor child Lillia, has died I fear—may, I am certain, from having allowed her mind to eat away her life. Young and innocent as she was, she had deceived herself, and loved."

"And was rejected!" exclaimed Edward.

"No," continued Anne; "but believing that she had betrayed her own affections, to one by whom her love was not returned, she drooped and died."

"Then she was too proud," said Edward, "to ask the truth, and sought the grave, rather than hazard a rejection. She was right; were I to love, I would suffer a thousand deaths, before I would——"

"Would what?" said a very pretty voice close to his ear.

Both he and Anne started at the sound, and were then greeted by a laugh from Flora, who was looking at them, from one of the windows of the ruins of the chapel, near which they were now passing.

"I hope I've not disturbed you," said she, "for really so absorbed did you both appear with each other's conversation, that, had I not known that freezing Master Edward, and chilly Mistress Anne, had been chiselled out of stone, I should really have believed I had been gazing upon two living lovers—stone did I say! I ought to have said ice, for ice is colder than stone; and yet that would have been a bad comparison, for ice will melt in time, and run away; therefore, ice and lovers are not so unlike as one would at first believe—are they?"

Both Anne and her companion attempted to smile, but failed; so Flora thinking it a bad time to jest further, told them that Dame Alyce and the lovely Eoline were in the ruins. Osborne felt rather relieved at the interruption which had broken off a conversation that he began to fear, would lead him to betray his secret to her, of all others he would have concealed it from. "No!" thought he, "where there is no hope there should be silence; if he had been so mad as to allow himself to look upon Anne with other than a brother's eyes, he deserved to pay the penalty his own folly had brought upon him; it was evident to him that Anne's feelings were very different to what his own had lately become, but independent of her lack of that warmest of all affections, love, there appeared to him a barrier quite as insurmountable as her coldness—that was his belief in the merchant's proud notions with regard to the future settlement of his daughter; so that the more he reflected upon the subject, the more necessary did it appear to him that he should not delay one unnecessary moment in flying from the enchantment in which he had suddenly found himself; an enchantment—that with hope, would have made this world to him an earthly paradise, but without that sweetest food of love, it was a spell of endless torture."

When they had joined Alyce and Eoline, they had much to say, first about the death of poor Lillia, the news of which shocked Alyce greatly; then concerning the strange discovery of the old man, to whom Anne had really owed her restoration to her home and adoring parents. Alyce hearing that by that time he would be at the cottage, hastened away with Eoline and Edward, leaving Anne and Flora to follow them. As they strolled home, Flora made several attempts to be sprightly, hoping

by these means to cheer up her young mistress; but all her efforts proved unavailing, so that long before they reached the cottage, the two had become perfectly silent. Was Anne ruminating upon the uncertainty of human life, exemplified in the unlooked-for death of her sweet young friend Lillia; or were her thoughts suddenly turned into a rapid channel, which until that day she knew not had existence, and even now dreamt not from whence it flowed, on to what smooth or troubled sea it might carry her away?

CHAPTER XXX.

If so were, that I might
Have all his treasure to myself alone,
There is no man that liveth under the throne
Of God, that should live so merry as I.

CHAUCER.

It was a dark and dreary night, and the hand of time was already pointing to the midnight hour, when in a miserable room, in one of the most miserable dwellings in the most miserable part of London, two persons might be seen sitting in deep converse by a single flickering lamp, whose vitality seemed to possess but a feeble hold upon the impure liquid that was intended to feed and cherish it. One of the speakers was a man well dressed, and of soldier-like bearing;—over the high back of the chair upon which he sat, hung his military cloak; he was well armed, and before him on the table lay a large pistol. His companion was very meanly dressed; haggard, and worn by toil and depravity, were her features, which had evidently been handsome in the days of their youth. Her eye was still bright, and from it flashed the light of firmness and determination.—The man was Horton—his companion, the wretch Nan, of the monster show.

“If what you say be sooth,” exclaimed Nan, “then my many troubles begin to end: while he lived, poor indeed was my chance of peace; he was one who never remembered a friend—nor ever forgot a foe. And you are sure he is dead?” she again enquired.

“Sure,” replied Horton—“I saw him with my own eyes expire on the field of battle.”

Horton did not think it necessary to acquaint Spikely’s wife with the care he himself had taken to assist his former friend out of this world.

“That he should die in blood,” said Nan, “is but what I had always expected; but a soldier’s death should not have been for him: the hangman’s knife, not the warrior’s sword, should have shed his blood, when half dead from hanging. I had always promised him to be within sight on that day; but if he’s dead, why, there’s an end. But are you sure?” she again repeated, as still doubting that such joyful news could really be true.

“Not only did I see him fall,” said Horton, “but saw the body cast upon the heap of dead ready for burial: he must be strong indeed if he can lift up the load of death and earth beneath which he lies, to come

and scare you more. How often it has struck me, Nanny (you see I still remember the old name I used to call you by when a mere babe). yes, Nanny, it has often struck me that certain spirits, or people, or whatever you like to call them, are destined from birth to work together, whether for good or evil; when I say together, I mean not hand in hand, but all their acts, words, deeds, or thoughts, though perhaps the actors be a thousand miles apart, are still by some mysterious link united—a single word at times, uttered at the Antipodes, will prove that link, and bring together, not the people, but their thoughts and deeds, and from that word new deeds and thoughts will take their spring, still keeping, as it were, the whole in concert though apart: who could have thought, when my father ill used the little girl, the pretty Nancy, and turned her adrift upon a heartless world, that that very act would one day bring about his own son's fortune, and by that means be a reward to her for all her wrongs; so be assured, Nanny," and he looked as kindly at her as his nature would allow, "that whatever fortune you bring to me, shall by you with me be shared."

"I'll take care of that," was the unexpected reply, "I've known the world too long to trust to fair words and soft looks; if you get it, I get it, or it is gotten by neither of us"

"All fair and straight as it should be," said Horton, "when a bargain is struck between a man and his dear old nurse: eh, Nanny? So now tell me all."

"When you have given me the bond I will; in law, I fancy, words that can be *seen*, bind faster than those that can be heard—sounds die away, and are easily forgotten—but ink stains deep, and can always revive short memories. I'll not be hard, and as the amount in all cannot be now discovered, I'll take one quarter of the whole, be it what it may."

Horton looked rather blank for a moment, for he found, what he had before suspected, that in his old nurse he had at least an equal, if not more, than his match. Feeling that to be shilly-shally now, would cost him more than he could gain by it, he appeared to enter at once honestly into her proposal. "Where is the ink, Nanny," he said, "that stains so deeply? not that my memory would require a reviver with regard to any promises made to you."

"It's close at hand," she replied, at the same time rising, and opening the shattered door of a cupboard; from a shelf inside she brought forth an old broken wine glass, the stem of which was forced into a bung by way of stand: in this was some ink. A new pen, and a sheet of white paper, she placed by its side before Horton.

"I can write while you talk, Nanny," said Horton, holding up the pen to the flickering lamp, as if to see that the nibs were equal, but in reality to gain time, and thus obtain as much information as possible, hoping that he might yet learn all without binding himself to a sort of partnership.

Nan never deigned to utter a word, or move a muscle. Horton glanced at her immovable features and stone-like form more than once; then, as if conscious of his own inability to move a rock, began to write. On ran his hand, but Nan moved not. At last he exclaimed—"Tis done!" Without saying a word, she quietly took the paper from

the table, and carefully perusing it, placed it again upon the table. "Right, quite right," she said, "a limb of Satan could not have worded it more binding!"

"Well, then," replied Horton, "if you are satisfied, all is concluded. So now, dear Nanny, relate all I would have you tell."

"A deed, is a deed," said Nan, "whether it has two names or four attached to it; but lawyers won't believe this simple fact; so we must have witnesses to make it binding."

Nan stamped her foot thrice upon the floor, when, to Horton's astonishment, in walked two of the most ill-looking fellows he had ever seen—and Horton had seen a few. The one was our former friend, Ugly Tom—the other, our almost-as-well-known intimate, the "walking gentleman" of the show, Master Walking-stick, the tall noseless son of the deceased giant—the long-since-bereaved husband of Sarah, the bandy-legged tight-rope dancer.

As actors, be their sphere of action ever so humble, always possess, whether from nature or from art, a rather superior carriage when they choose, the present performers entered, and, though ruffians in look, saluted Horton courteously. This made him lift his hand from the pistol, upon which he had placed it, and raising his cap, salute them. They appeared perfectly to understand why they had been called; for upon Nan pointing to the paper, and Horton passing his pen again over his signature, they both stepped forward, and having made their marks X, ✕, without a word, retired.

As Nan doubled up the paper and placed it in a cupboard (not the one from which she had taken the ink, but one that was well barred and nailed with iron), she said, "I called the boys,"—now the boys were the one about six feet, the other nearer eight feet in height—"not so much to witness your signature—for that, would you cheat me, would be of little value—but to shew you that I am here 'midst friends; and such, that did you attempt to play me false, would let your throat know that a tongueless mouth might be made below your chin. Think of this, and keep your bond."

"Where we have honest thoughts," said Horton, attempting to assume an easy air, "we fear little from the punishment of those who only punish our misdeeds: so, fear me not."

"I never feared but one man in my life," replied Nan, "and he would make a devil fear—but you say he is dead, so let that pass. And now what would you learn?"

"What you alone can tell," replied Horton. "Who, and what am I?—for I am not what I seem to be. Who, and what is Eoline?—for she is not what she seems."

"In both surmises you are right. The world believes her a penniless, sightless orphan—you believe her to be your sister. The world and you are wrong."

"Not my sister!" exclaimed Horton.

"No!" replied Nan. "No blood of hers and yours ever flowed in the same channel. Don't dash out my brains," she continued, half laughing, yet still evincing fear, "when I humble the pride of Master

Horton, the would-be heir of Horton of Henley—when I tell him his rightful father was a thief—my sister ~~was~~ ^{was} his mother.”

As she said this, involuntarily she drew herself back further from Horton, who, starting to his feet, cast on her a look that would have blasted if it could, as he exclaimed, “Thou liest, hell cat! I came not here for fooleries like these, but to seek truth, and through the truth find fortune.”

“And if you be wise,” she coolly replied, “in me you have found them both. Sit quietly and listen; fools only rave, and wisdom itself turns foolish when but of temper: so sit, and coolly listen.”

Horton again seated himself; but by the workings of his features, and the bitings of his lips, it was not difficult to read, that in his mind she had opened a page not easy to be digested, if even understood.

“To make all clear to you, I must relate matters of an early date, even before your birth. The man you always thought to be your father, Andrew Horton, who, from dissipation, died an old young man, had from early youth lived one unaltered course of deep, though secret depravity. Woman was his prey. My sister was one of his many victims. Of my own wrongs I will not speak. Tempted by a sum of money, one of the Birds of the Clink married my sister—you are their child.”

Horton again bit his lips and frowned, but held his peace.

“Some time before this, (the real cause why he gave the bribe, was to rid himself of my sister,) he wedded with a girl lowly of birth, but beautiful in face. I too was reckoned handsome then, and for my beauty, I suppose, had been retained: at all events I was still beneath his roof, when his wife bore to him a son; at the same moment you were born; and then it was that the idea entered my mind, what a glorious revenge it would be, to change the children, and make the thief’s son Horton’s heir, and bring up Horton’s son midst thieves! The thought was scarcely formed before it was fulfilled. Horton’s real son grew up a lovely boy, effeminate but beautiful. An old man, who must have been of great wealth, took a liking to him, and, for an enormous sum, bought him of your mother, promising to make him his heir. Who the old man was, and what became of the boy, I have never been able to learn. All I know is, they went abroad, and now perchance are both dead. You grew up a wayward boy; the blood of your real father was in your veins, and made you what you are. She whom you called your mother had another child, a girl, born in sorrow, for Horton was a brute, and drove his wife almost to madness. I have known her weep until she lost all power of sight—whether this could have influenced the fate of her child that was still unborn, I know not; but when it came into the world it was blind—totally blind: that child was Eoline.”

“But how came she in the convent of the Minorities?” said Horton; “and how knew the Abbess that she was my father’s child? or the man I called my father, if it be really as you say.”

“That I cannot answer,” said Nan; “that knowledge is not mine to give; but that Eoline and the child of Horton were one, I did; for my sister, taking a religious fit, became one of the poor Clares; and when she died, as she did soon after she had entered, I saw the blind girl

there, and knew her: she had been lost before I was driven from his roof, and I gloried in knowing it, for, strange to say, the only thing he ever seemed to really love was that blind child: his wife had long before fled from him, and, it is believed, destroyed herself. •We must meet again, for I am worn out to-night, and there is much yet to tell, ere our plan can be brought to bear: give me some money, and then leave me.”

Horton, who would have learnt all at once if he could, but knowing the being he had to deal with, felt it would be useless to press her further, placed a purse upon the table, appointed another meeting, and then taking up the pistol, left the wretched apartment. Nan held the nearly-exhausted lamp over the stairs to enable Horton to find his way down to the outer door. The two men he had seen above were there, who, without speaking, led him to the end of the alley, where they left him to pursue his way along the more open street.

“If what she say be true,” he muttered to himself, “I am not the heir to Horton: no one but ourselves knows that secret; how then would my claim stand were she dead? Should I gain more by her evidence upon other points, or safety by her death? for if she please she can at once upset all my claim to the wealth of the old wretch I used to call my father: and yet I cannot do without her; she alone can prove the death of Eoline, and of the Abbess too; but I’ll not work my brain upon this point until I have heard all she can divulge. ‘The son of a thief!’ I could have brained her when she said it. If I but accomplish my end, her reward shall be ample, but not such as she would have: no, no; her knowledge is too valuable to be left at her own disposal; but with her I can easily settle when the fit time shall come.” Filled with thoughts like these he pursued his way to his own abode.

The reader may easily imagine how completely Anne’s mind was torn by conflicting emotions; the strange reappearance of the Cripple with Eoline had added no little to her causes of serious thought: the fate of her sweet young friend, Lillia, gave a blow to her heart almost insupportable, for she felt that, however innocently on her part, still she was to a degree a participator in the cause of her untimely death. Then came the old man, the only friend of her childhood’s wretched days, to tear up from the hidden stores of her memory, all the recollections of those incidents of her early life, that she would have wished to have been blotted out of her remembrance for ever; but even all these varied feelings seemed as nought compared to the painful sensation that Osborne’s determination to quit England had given rise to.

So completely occupied had every one at the cottage been, from one cause or another, that Anne and Osborne had not for several days been again alone. Anne became every hour more and more abstracted; her greatest pleasure was to be alone, or with her poor old friend, who had been at once settled in a cottage of the farm, where, for hours and hours, would the two talk over their past miseries, and of their future hopes. When they spoke of the future, Anne invariably became sad, and would, as quickly as possible, fly back to her days of suffering, as being to her less painful than the anticipation of those that might yet come. One night, as Flora was attending upon her, previous to her retiring to rest, she became so buried in her own thoughts that Flora could bear it no

longer; so let loose to her powers of speech, and they were pretty strong ones, she started off at full speed, touching upon every subject she could think of as likely to interest and rouse her young mistress.

"Only think of that," said she, after having galloped along for some time upon the same theme, "only think of that! oh! it's true, for William heard it in the city, from a quarter that must know the truth; and then you know your mother will be a real lady. How fine it will sound, won't it? to hear merchant Hewet called 'my Lord,' and dame Alyce, 'my Lady;' what a pity a Lord Mayor is not a Lord Mayor always—it takes away half one's delight to think that at the end of a year, my Lord isn't my Lord; but the King always, William says, knights the Lord Mayors; so you know 'Sir William Hewet' won't sound so very bad—will it?"

"What are you talking about?" said Anne, having just caught the last few words.

"What about?" replied Flora; "why haven't you heard all I've been telling you, that very soon, so William says, your father, my honoured master, will be a grand Lord Mayor; and won't he look handsome when he rides along in my Lord Mayor's show? But, oh dear! oh lor'!"

"Are you ill?" exclaimed Anne, anxiously.

"Oh my!" continued Flora, "oh dear! if Master Hewet is a Lord Mayor, I shall become a prisoner for the rest of my life."

"What nonsense are you talking of Flora?" said Anne. "What mean you by a prisoner?"

"Why, you must know that I have promised, that when master becomes Lord Mayor, William shall become my lord and master: William is so dreadfully impatient."

Flora continued to chatter about her master's probable grandeur that was to come; but Anne paid little attention to her; so the poor girl having failed in her endeavour to cheer her young mistress, by degrees herself became sadder and sadder, when at last, heaving a sigh, she said, "I hope to Heaven what William says about master Edward may not be true."

"Edward!" ejaculated Anne, "what of Edward?"

"Oh!" replied Flora, in a very sorrowful tone, "he has told William that he intends leaving us, and quitting England for ever."

"He has told me so too," said Anne, in a tone more sorrowful than the other; "and ever since he did so, I have never been able to think of anything else: what can it mean? Leave us—leave his home—leave all he declared he loved!"

"Oh, these men," replied Flora, "are such strange unaccountable creatures, that they seldom, if ever know themselves what their actions mean! And he has become so melancholy lately, and so thoughtful, and so pale, and he's always sighing." Anne heaved a sigh. "Yes, just like that," said Flora; "I don't think, if he should go away, that he will live long."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Anne, "what makes you say that?"

"Because I think he will destroy himself. I often hear him, when he doesn't know that I do hear him, ask himself what there is in this life worth living for? and then he laughs; but it is such a melancholy laugh; and then walks about; and, in fact, acts like a madman."

"If what you say be true," observed Anne, "there must be some good cause for such strange conduct."

"Oh, there's plenty of cause," said Flora, in a tone of voice that seemed to imply she could tell a good deal more if she were asked; she waited, but Anne spoke not; so as Flora had now determined to speak out, she repeated the sentence, "Oh, there's plenty of cause."

"Would that I knew where to look for it!" replied Anne.

"Look for it?" observed the other, in a rather pert manner, "you need not look far."

"Not look far?" exclaimed Anne, enquiringly; "and pray where should I look?"

"In that glass," said the other, "and there you'll see the cause; and quite cause enough, to my thinking."

"I see my own face there," said Anne.

"And that is the cause, and the only cause. Oh, my dear young mistress, it's no use mincing matters any longer—Edward Osborne is dying—yes dying of love for you."

"For me!" exclaimed Anne, turning deadly pale; "that he loves me is nothing new, nor is my love for him a novelty, but it has ever been the simple love of a brother and a sister."

"Yes, and so he thought," said Flora, "until that Master Lerue opened his eyes; I'll tell you something about him, too, one of these days."

"Lerue!" exclaimed Anne; "but what can he have to do with it?"

"He has had everything to do with it, and has done it all, and I am very glad he has, for now we know the truth. Oh, that jealousy! that's the thing for bringing out love. If Alyce Vaughan had never looked at my William, I don't think I should have ever looked at him myself; but the moment I thought it possible that that minx could take him away, I couldn't stand that, so I took him away instead. It has been just the same with Master Edward; while he could come and see you, and talk to you, and know that no other good-looking fellow came near you, oh! then it was all comfortable enough—then it was all brotherly love, do y'see; but the moment he found a fine handsome young man, and we must all own that Master Lerue is handsome enough to make even Edward tremble in such a case—yes, the moment Lerue shot the ruffian through the head, it shot through the mind of Master Edward, that, perchance, the next aim he might take, would be at something rather more tender than an old robber: that shot was the cause of Edward's wounded heart, and if something is not done to heal it, he'll die."

"But what *can* be done?" enquired Anne, quite innocently.

"What *can* be done? I'll tell you: you see, it is said that 'like cures like;' for instance, a burnt finger is cured by holding it to the fire; now if this is true in one thing, it may be true in another; so, if Master Edward's heart has been wounded by love, why, let love be the plaster, and do you put it on."

"You are now talking like a mad girl, Flora," replied Anne, at the same time endeavouring to look rather angry; but as young ladies have never yet been known to look really so, on account of being told that a young man is in love with them, it seemed to Flora, that anger had for

once put on a most lovely expression ; “ you are talking like a mad girl—indeed you are ; for supposing dear Edward, dear *brother* Edward, were really hurt in the way you say, it is not becoming in the physician to thrust himself forward, and offer a prescription unasked. Indeed, indeed Flora,” she went on, but at every word, the lovely smile and rosy tint that had for a moment adorned her cheek, faded away, and by the end of her speech she had sunk into a perfect sadness, “ indeed you are wrong ; Edward has never by word, or look, or deed, betrayed to me that feelings different to those we felt for each other in childhood, had taken possession of his heart.”

“ Ch, dear ! oh, dear ! oh, dear !” interrupted Flora, “ you young ladies are uncommonly dull of apprehension, or dreadful hypocrites. Can eyes speak—and do they ever speak ? Can sighs tell tales—and do they ever tell tales ? Indeed they do, and sometimes such as are not quite true either. Can words—and do words, that are intended for crossness, sometimes betray their speaker, and show that kindness, nay, love, was at the bottom of the feeling which prompted them. All this would apply to Master Edward, and yet you tell me he has never, by word, look, or deed, told you that he loves you. But I have another proof, if another proof were wanting, and one that no one would be bold enough to question—look here !” As she said this, she took from a sort of pocket a sheet of paper, which she unfolded, and held up by the two corners, as a flag of triumph. “ Did ever a young man, and does ever a young man, write poetry if he isn’t in love ! The thing’s impossible ! for I have been told that there never was a line of poetry written worth the reading, that had not been penned with the hope to gain the praise of some fair maid—read that.”

Anne took the paper, and read—THE DREAM OF LOVE.

“ Why this,” she said, “ is the old song you read to us before.”

“ I called it an old one, just to vex and perplex the young poet ; but it is a right down new ditty, and Edward is the author.”

She then told Anne how it came into her possession, and then Anne read it, and Anne admired it ; and then Flora began to find all sorts of faults with it ; and then Flora said that having shewn it to her young mistress, she might as well burn it. And Anne thought so too, but forgot to give up possession of it ; but kept it in her hand on her lap, and started off quite lively upon a very different subject, and entered into all sorts of plans for making her poor old friend at the farm happy ; and then she sent Flora down to the parlour to see that all was safe, for she really thought she heard a strange noise there.

As Flora heard no strange noise, she at once went down without the least alarm.

The moment she was gone, Anne looked upon the song with one of her sweetest smiles ; and dare we tell what she then did ?—she kissed it, and then carefully, but quickly folding it, placed it in her bosom, just as Flora returned.

The first thing Flora noticed to herself, as she entered, was the disappearance of the paper ; but being a woman herself, she gave a tolerable shrewd guess what its fate had been, so said nothing.

Anne had not talked so rapidly as she now did, for no one knew when ;

and Flora feeling certain that she had put the spark to the right train, took the first opportunity of bidding her lovely young mistress, good night, and left the room. As she did so, she said to herself—"They shall be married, I'm determined."

Anne now being free from observation, let loose to her most hidden feelings.—"Why have I been thus blind so long?" she exclaimed; "he loves me, but believes I love not him: and do I? I am asking myself a dangerous question. What if I answer—no. Then he will quit us for ever, and will, when absent, soon forget me. Forget me! I could not bear him to do that; but if I love him not, why should I wish for his remembrance?"

She again drew forth the paper, and once more read the song—"And that Flora, too," she said, "to abuse these lines: I thought she had better taste. I can find no fault in them—none. If a new affection, or, perhaps one, but newly made manifest to me, had not sprung up within my heart, why has that heart been so miserably sad ever since the hour he talked of parting from me? Let me try myself by supposing that he were really gone, really gone for ever, what would my feelings be then?" She waited not long for the answer, for the question had burst open the flood-gates of her heart; the hitherto pent up stream of pure affection rushed to her eyes, and thence escaped in a violent flood of tears; all the efforts she made to stay them seemed but to add new waters to the fountains of her heart. She buried her head in her fair hands, as they held the song, which was soon nearly obliterated by the sweetest stream that ever hallowed a poet's verse.

She had remained some time lost in thought, when she murmured—"I know it—I know I love him now!" and as she said this she kissed the writing; just as she had done so, she was startled by her door opening gently, and Flora entering.

"Hush!" said Flora, placing her finger on her lip; "hush! I'm sure I heard it!"

"Heard what?" enquired Anne, in the same fearful subdued tone, for Flora's manner had suddenly alarmed her.

"The sound of voices in the grounds behind the house," said Flora. "Shall I arouse Edward and the Cripple, for I feel certain there is some danger near at hand? It was not a passing sound, as of late-wayfarers journeying over the Heath, but a kind of subdued murmur, as of persons secretly plotting close to the house. I had heard nothing until, by accident, I had extinguished my light. If there are robbers, they have been waiting until they are sure all have retired to rest."

"Talk not of robbers, Flora; it cannot be: your fears have deceived your ears. We will first be certain, at all events, before we alarm others. Place the lamp out of sight in yonder cupboard, and I will descend with you, and learn the truth."

Neither Anne nor Flora were wanting in courage; but as they quitted the room on tiptoe, and in darkness, they could not prevent a trembling seizing upon them; as they went along a gallery the moon shone brightly, which greatly reassured them, and they approached the casement; all was still in that direction; the fields and hedges seemed clothed in silver, so brightly did the moon light up the scene. They

now descended, the stairs with firmer steps, for both were by degrees becoming more and more assured that all was well; they listened at every door, that led towards the outside of the dwelling, but all was still; there was but one more place to examine—the kitchen: this opened on a sort of farm-yard, and was now in perfect darkness; they lifted the latch of the door; all was still; they entered; when suddenly, without speaking a word, they seized each other's hands, and stood petrified; for now there no longer remained a doubt. They heard a strange, low, peculiar sound, as of something placed against the outer door, which seemed to be turning, and turning, but very slowly and carefully, as though to cause as little noise as possible; in another moment a blow came against the door, as the part that had been worked upon had given way; something was now withdrawn, and now they plainly saw a round hole in the door; and then the same sort of sound was repeated at a little distance from the hole.

Not a moment was to be lost; as quickly as their trembling limbs would bear them, they hastened, Flora to arouse Edward—Anne to awaken the Cripple-of-the-Bridge.

It was some little time before either of the sleepers could be made conscious that danger was at hand; as soon as this was made clear to them, a few moments more and they came forth, bearing all the arms they could muster. What was to be done? Flora was sure, she said, "that there were numbers of assailants, for when she first heard them, it was not the sound of a single voice, but rather the murmuring of many." Resistance, under such circumstances, seemed hopeless, but still neither Willy-of-the-Bridge nor Edward were men to give in without a struggle: what would they not then have given at that moment, for the aid of William and the merchant? At first, it seemed impossible that they could even alarm the people of the farm, until Anne proposed, nay insisted, upon making the trial herself; the direct road lay across the yard wherein the robbers were, therefore that way was impossible; but it struck her that by leaving the house by the front, and then going round creeping along beneath the hedges, she might by chance attain her end, and bring, although but scanty aid, yet, sufficient to do some good, and enable them to hold out until the farm servants might call in other assistance. Willingly would Edward, or the Cripple, have undertaken this perilous affair, but they felt, too truly, that all hope lay in their remaining where they were. Cautiously did Anne now leave the dwelling—they watched her steal along, until a turning hid her from their sight; then the Cripple, with Edward, stole to the kitchen, through the door of which they now perceived several holes all close together.

"Shall I fire through the door?" said Edward, in a whisper.

"Not yet," replied the Cripple; "the few shots we can fire must take effect, or we are lost: when that piece of the door is removed, you will see an arm pushed through to undo the fastenings—take a sure aim, and one, at least, will bite the dust."

Scarcely had the Cripple uttered these words, when the piece of the door was broken away, and an arm did appear—one flash, and a horrid cry told how truly Edward had taken his aim; this done, the robbers hearing the report, and finding, by one of their fellows falling dead,

that secrecy was now of little use, shouted, and muttering the vilest execrations against all within, began to batter at the door with heavy beams of wood; so strong as the door was, it was evident that a few moments would suffice for its destruction; there was no hope now of escape by the front, for they heard a voice calling aloud to surround the house, and not let even a rat escape alive.

The uproar that ensued soon brought Alyce and the other females down in frightful alarm; the door gave way, Edward and the Cripple fired upon the robbers, and then retreated, followed by the assailants, the principal robber calling aloud to the fugitives, and telling them, "that had they not fired, and killed their men, they should merely have taken what they could get, and have left all lives safe, but now, that not one should escape to tell that night's tale." Knowing there would be no time to reload their pistols, they reserved their fire for the last extremity, and the Cripple having found his staff, laid more than one ruffian bleeding upon the ground. From room to room they fought with desperation; Edward had flown to his own, and had armed himself with a sword; the screams and shouts were frightful; despair had now seized upon even the Cripple, who at one moment thought to fly to Foline, and with his own hand end her life, rather than let her fall into the power of the wretches who were calling out to fire the place.

Who can picture the scene which now ensued; despair on one side, brutal triumph on the other; the dreaded moment of conquest seemed already come, when the last kind of relief that could have entered into the mind of either Edward or the Cripple, suddenly appeared in the shape of soldiers armed to the teeth; but what caused in Flora's mind still greater surprise, was to see the soldiers led on by her own dear William.

At the moment of their appearance, Edward, who had, as we have said, retired to his room and armed himself with a sword, was in the act of thrusting it into the heart of one of the robbers who had endeavoured to cut him down with an axe. As the man fell backwards down the stairs, the Bridge-shooter, who, having rescued Flora from the grasp of the head robber, shot him dead.

The house was now filled with armed men, wounded and dying robbers, and women on their knees, offering up thanks for their unlooked-for preservation. The few thieves that remained were soon marched off; those that had escaped were being hotly pursued in various directions over the Heath. What a different scene now began! All the farm servants were busy, and laughing, and preparing all kinds of refreshments for their deliverers. The cressets were stuck around the cottage, as if for a triumphant illumination. So powerful had been the revulsion of feelings from despair to joy, that no one appeared quite in their senses. Flora kept hugging William, till he felt quite ashamed of her; but as others seemed as mad as she, it did not matter much at such a moment. At last, Edward, who had been to see to the comforts of their deliverers, having returned, enquired where Anne was? Strange as it may seem, it had never occurred to any one that she was not there. Flora believed she was in her own room, doubtless offering up a prayer of thankfulness; but Alyce, feeling anxious, hastened to the room, and found it empty. This caused serious fears. All were in a state of

bustle, and hurrying here and there. Every nook in the place was examined, but she was no where to be found. But what added still more to the strangeness of her disappearance, was the circumstance of her not having seen or heard of at the farm. All that were questioned upon this point declared, that she had never been there at all. Where could she be? A dreadful thought struck upon Edward's mind, that perhaps she had fallen by an assassin's hand. In a moment a new search was made. The cressets were all siezed upon, and not finding her any where near the cottage, different parties sallied forth over the Heath.

As the old man of the show took up his staff, determined to aid in the search after his benefactress, the whole scene near Tybourne Tree was recalled forcibly to his mind. He looked over the Heath—the lights were moving about in every direction, as they like had happened years ago, when Nan and her crew were seeking for Anne. How fervently did he pray, that on this night, as on that, that he might be by Heaven selected to be the saviour of the lost child. On and on he trudged, not quickly, but full of hope, for he felt sure, that some good would come from his endeavours to save her, who had so recently saved him.

After walking a long time, he was surprised to see, within the ruins of the chapel, which he had nearly reached, several lights, but he was sure they were not the lights carried by any of those searching for the lost girl; for they moved not.

He approached to one of the ruined windows, and looked in upon a strange and awful scene. In the centre was a grave, and on each side of which was placed a coffin; the one was much smaller than the other, but both were covered in the same manner, and both were very plain. Some half dozen rustic-looking men stood by, who acted as real mourners, for their honest faces had many a tear upon them. At the head of the grave stood a man, reading from a book, the service of the dead in English; he had no robes, or official vestments upon him, but had a look of deep and earnest devotion painted upon his countenance.

The old man seeing this, felt at once the truth, that this was some Protestant funeral. He took from his head his cap, and stood motionless. The feeling came over him, as if he were attending the last sad office of taking farewell, an eternal farewell, of some dear friend.

The ceremony was just ended; the larger coffin too, was soon deposited in its endless home. As the smaller one was just being lifted over the aperture, the old man was made to start, by hearing a violent crying came from one corner of the ruins; he turned his gaze that way, and saw a country lad in violent grief, who, as the coffin descended, exclaimed, "Oh, my poor young missus, I shall never see her again, bless her! I shall never see her again—no, never, bless her!"

The old man was greatly moved at this simple but heartfelt grief of the poor lad, so much so, that, anxious as he was to aid in the search for Anne, he could not resist a feeling of curiosity to learn who had then gone to their home, and whose death could have caused such grief to the country lad.

When the grave had been filled up, the lad, leaving the ruins by one side, as the others quitted the place in an opposite direction, was follow-



An attack at the cottage

ed by the old man.—“My good boy,” he said, “you must have lost a friend that was very dear to you, to make you cry thus violently?”

“Ho!y,” replied the boy, “indeed I have; and you’d a cried too, if you’d a’ know’d my young missus, bless her!” and the boy blubbered again louder than before.

“And who was your mistress?” asked the old man.

“Young Missus Lillia, of the Ferry. Ho, ho! dang me, but you would a’ cried too, had you’d known her—bless her! and only to think that she should die, and her father should die, and all just when he had got a new name, and a great heap of money.”

“A new name, and a heap of money! and what was his new name, eh, my good lad?”

“Algernon Mortley—so they says.”

“Algernon Mortley!” exclaimed the venerable inquirer; “how strange! why, that was my own brother’s name.”

“No! was it, though?” said the boy, opening his eyes and his mouth, as he stared up in the old man’s face; “by gumtion, wouldn’t it be rum, an’ you were to turn out to be your brother’s brother! if you bes’ an’ wont you be plaguy rich, neither—for they says he would have had a ocean of money. Do you come with me to the Ferry, for there’s a chap comed from London who can tell’e all about it. Why, if you’re his brother, you’re my young missus’s uncle, and if you are, oh do, let me be your lad, only for her sake, bless her! will ‘e?”

The old man, thinking the lad’s advice anything but bad, determined to hasten to the Ferry; but in their way they would pass the cottage, and inquire what success had happened.

When he reached the cottage, he learnt that but few had yet returned, and those few with ill success. Thinking, that while making inquiries into the strange chance which had perhaps, revealed to him the fate of his elder brother—who had in early life fled from home, rather than enter into a marriage he loathed, and had, until that day, never been heard of again—he might do good by giving the alarm at the Ferry of the missing girl, he hurried on with the lad.

When they arrived there, the person from London had gone back again, so that for this night it was impossible to make further progress in his own affairs.

He now inquired who had been passing by the Ferry that night, and who had arrived?

“Why, the first that came,” said the man in charge of the Ferry, “were ill looking fellows, in cloaks, and who hadn’t a civil word for any one: they rowed their own boat, and tied it to a place a little lower down there, and then went towards the Heath; then, after this came a guard of honour to sleep here, and be ready in the morning to receive the Lord High Admiral, who’s coming to these parts on his way to—oh, I forget where; and then came the young fellow that belongs to Master Allen at the cottage; he came along like mad, for in his boat there were six of the stoutest rowers I have ever seen: and was he not glad to see the soldiers, and they seemed glad to see him; for after having

said something to the captain of guard, they were all alive in a minute, and off they started, at double quick time."

Upon hearing this, the old man saw plainly how the aid had come so opportunely to the cottage, and saved all their lives.—"And has no one gone away?" he inquired.

"Not from the Ferry," said the man; "but the boat that was down there, belonging to the two strange fellows, that's gone: and my boy says, they brought something with them, that looked like a long bale of goods. I wonder if they've been out on the thief?"

The old man, not being able to gain any further information, now strolled back towards the Cottage. As he went along, he met Osborne and the Bridge-shooter: to them he related all he had heard at the Ferry, and also the strange circumstance of the double funeral at the ruined chapel.

Every endeavour to discover the lost Anne proved abortive, and with saddened hearts the three returned to the Cottage of the Heath.

As may be supposed, Alyce was inconsolable, and passed the remainder of the night in the most abject grief. All her former sufferings, at the first loss of her child, now came upon her with redoubled pain. Upon the former occasion there was some clue to guide them; the visit of the strange woman explained at once, that the child had been stolen; but now all was doubt and horrible conjecture. Could she have fallen into the deep well?—even that spot was searched, but without avail.

Late as the night was, Edward and the Bridge-shooter determined to hasten away to London, to acquaint the merchant with the dreadful news. The inmates of the cottage were safe enough now, for several of the soldiers mounted guard, and the rest were to remain until the morning at the farm. So, taking a hurried leave of their friends, Edward and his trusty companion started upon their midnight journey.

As they travelled along, the Bridge-shooter informed young Osborne of the manner in which he had been so happily made the instrument of their rescue from the attack of the robbers.—"For once," said he, "I must own, old mother has been as good as a witch; and I'll call her whatever names she likes after this. You must know, that this afternoon, down she sent for me, and such a message, that there was no denial to be offered, so off to her I went. 'Where is the merchant?' said she. 'Out,' said I, 'and won't be at the Bridge till the morning.' 'Then you must act for him. Ask no questions, but hurry down to the river, get six of the strongest rowers you can, tell them to pull for their lives, and convey you to Putney; when there, get what aid you can, and hasten to the cottage: they must not save their own breath, or the breath of those they go to save may already have past into death. I wanted some further explanation; 'but,' she said, 'this is no folly of mine, as some of my whims are; but do as I tell you, or the deep curse of a mother shall be yours!' So determined did she appear, that I at once made up my mind to fulfil her commands. 'Kiss me, good lad,' she said, when she saw I would do her bidding; 'and this much I can reveal—Cottage will this night be attacked, and plundered, if nothing worse should happen, unless you be there before the clock shall



The Abduction

sound the eleventh hour of night.' Off I started, got my rowers, staunch and true; the tide was with us, and gallantly we cut along. All the rest you know."

They now entered the boat, and as they had the same rowers, and the tide having turned in their favour, rapidly did they float o'er the silver waters. As they were just off where the Southwark Bridge now spans the Thames, they passed a boat, going on but at a sluggish pace; two men were rowing, and at the bottom of the boat lay something not unlike a dead body, wrapped round with sailcloth.

"What cheer, friends?" called out the Bridge-shooter.

No answer was returned; but both the men stopped pulling, and then turned the head of the boat, as if about to land; but seeing the boat with the six rowers, now far a-head, the men put again into their former course, and passed on. When they arrived at Old London Bridge, the two men fastened the boat to the sterling, under the arch beneath the Cardinal's Hat; a signal being given, the trap above was opened, and a ladder let down. A man was seen holding a torch from the trap-door—that man was Brassinjaw. One of the men in the boat, unwrapping the sailcloth, lifted up the senseless form of a female, and thus laden, began to ascend the ladder; the other man remained in the boat to steady it—this was Nino, the Italian; the first was Spikely. We need scarcely say, that the senseless form he carried, was that of the lovely Anne.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Let take a cat, and foster her with milk
And tender flesh, and make her couch of silk;
And let her see a mouse go by the wall,
Anon she waiveth milk and flesh and all,
And every dainty that is in that house:
Such appetite hath she to eat the mouse.

CHAUCER.

"NATURES never alter," said Nan, addressing Horton; "a rat's a rat, and a rogue's a rogue from first to last; it is knowing this which makes me guard myself against you."

"In this you wrong me, aunt," replied Horton, using the word *aunt* for the first time, and as he pronounced it he looked at her kindly, but Nan appeared not to have heard the word, nor to have marked his hypocritical look; "for you are my *aunt* you know, Nanny," he repeated, pronouncing the name still louder, "that's certain enough."

"I am not proud of the relationship," she replied, "nor do I ought to scree you out of love; I am tired and weary of the life I have so long led, and if you keep your faith with me—and I'll take pretty good care you shall do so—the moment I have been paid for the work I have done, you will see no more of me: but now to business. What I could prove, and what I will prove, are widely different affairs: I am the only living being who knows who and what you are; therefore I could ruin your

hopes did I please to do so. I am the only living being who can prove the death of Eoline, the real child of Horton: there was one other, whom I always did suspect, knew the truth of Eoline's birth; but she too, I can prove is dead."

"Then you are sure not one besides yourself escaped the storm?"

"Not one! Oh, it was a dreadful night! How strange it was that after so long a wandering abroad that I should chance to be in the same ship returning to England with those whom alone you had to fear, and that of all on board, I alone should be saved to bring you tidings of their certain death."

"Then you can swear you saw Eoline perish?" said Horton, once again asking the question she had so often before answered.

"Have I not told you a dozen times, that when the vessel went to pieces upon the sands, I and the old abbess alone were carried away in the shattered boat; she was not so strong as I, and soon sank to the bottom of the boat, where I believe she died, just before I was tossed from it, as it struck against a ship that was driving before the wind. I caught hold of a piece of wreck that floated by, and by its aid was borne to the shore just as my strength was failing me. But enough of that; now tell me, and tell me clearly, for my brain seems rusting fast, how the case really stands, and why, if you are regarded as Horton's only son, Eoline, even had she been in truth your sister, should be such a stumbling block in your way."

"Why, thus stands the whole affair," replied Horton; "you see that when my father, I mean old Andrew Horton, died, it was discovered that he had left all his property in trust; this was done, as his will alleged, on account of the irregularities and depravity of his only son Henry, that is, myself: the love he bore for his blind child never left him, nor would he ever believe but that one day she would be discovered, and under this idea, his will was made, and to her was left the bulk of his wealth—to me, barely sufficient to prevent starvation, at least until I should have grown older, and, as he said, wiser. There was a clause that if his daughter should not be found by a certain date, but a very distant one it was, or that the death of the child could be proved, why then, as he had no other relation in the world, the property might come to me. Suspecting something of his intentions, I managed to steal this will, leaving a blank document sealed up in its stead; I knew that if he died without a will, everything must be mine; it was but a boy's trick, and only proved the wish to out-manœuvre without the sense to accomplish the scheme—what was the use of destroying the will, unless we destroyed at the same time the maker of that will? As I ought to have known it would be, the cheat was soon discovered, but the old wretch never hinted to me that he had detected the theft, and I doubt not, used to chuckle within himself to think how he had done the deed. When he died, oh, how I wept! just as a dutiful son must weep for a kind departed sire who has left him immense wealth. I thought that every golden sovereign was worth a tear, so I shed abundance, for I knew how rich he was. But my grief was soon ended, for when I presented myself as the sole heir, up started a new claimant in the shape of a man of law, who, to my confusion, produced the very counterpart of

the will I had stolen, and which, although I had not myself destroyed I knew had been destroyed by others. He took possession of everything as sole trustee, so that my only chance of inheritance lay in patiently waiting until my hair had lost its colour, and my eyes their light, so distant was the date at which I might inherit, for it lay with me to prove the death of Eoline: now here arose another difficulty; the old abbess, as you rightly suspected, did know the truth of Eoline's parentage, and to keep her out of my power, wedded her to the Cripple, thus casting my hopes farther off than ever; I attempted his destruction by an accusation of heresy, but he eluded the snare, and I lost sight of him for years; my strange meeting with you has revealed their fates to me, and I now ride once more upon the sunny flood of hope: from letters I possess, written by the abbess, the identity of Eoline can be shown; your evidence will prove her death, and that of her husband—so you see, Nanny, your old age may be a happy one, if wealth can make it so."

"The wealth of a virtuous memory alone brings happiness to age, and not possessing that," she replied, "gold brings comfort but to the body, not the heart.—And when shall I have to shew myself in the light of day?"

"Immediately," replied Horton; "all has been prepared, and now you have no fear of meeting him," and he involuntarily glanced round the room, as if to be sure no one was there, for at that moment he plainly saw, in his mind's eye, the whole horrid scene he had enacted when stabbing Spikely on the battle field; "no, you have nought to fear, so that now you have money, a more seemly dwelling will better befit your new station, and some attire of a newer cut than these worn and tattered vestments. Come, come, cheer up, old girl—bright days are in store!"

"I begin to feel," said Nan, "that to an active mind, repose is less endurable than fatigue. While I knew not from one hour to another where my home would be, the mind was buoyant from excitement; he who is always seeking, always hopes to find, and in hope, not in possession, lies what we call happiness; my life for years had been that of shifts and stratagems—the one day hoping to find the wherewithal to keep life and soul together—the next, to find a refuge to protect myself against him who would have torn that life and soul asunder; but now, already do I feel the end has come—where shall I for the future look for that excitement, which alone brings an opiate to the memory of the wicked? Priests tell us there is comfort in confession. If I could but think so——"

"Why, Nanny! Nanny!" exclaimed Horton, "I verily believe, were nunneries not prohibited, Nanny would become a nun!"

"There are worse than she, have made an end as good," replied Nan. "I have thought of that ere now. But first let us finish the job in hand, before I enter upon a labour so immense as that of working out my own redemption. When will the trial come on?"

"Almost immediately," replied Horton; "so Nanny, girl, be ready; put on your best looks and your best gear; for as you are my only witness, we must make the most of you. I must leave you now," he said, rising, "for I have to meet my counsel, the celebrated Thunderdown; had our opponent but obtained his aid, I should have trembled for our chance; there are few witnesses can stand his cross questionings; and

there are circumstances, Nanny, connected with your life, that are as well kept in the shade ; all will depend upon the credence given to your testimony ; so we must make you appear as bright and open as the day to judge and jury ; your having been abroad so long will render it very unlikely that you should be recognised under your new name and altered appearance."

"There was but one I feared," said Nain, "and he is dead ; so all will go well, depend on't."

Horton now retired to attend his appointment with the celebrated Sergeant Thunderdown, whom he found in high spirits at the anticipated triumph he should achieve in the coming trial. "At last," he said, chuckling, and rubbing his hands, "at last I shall have the long-wished for opportunity of putting an extinguisher upon that detestable Whistlepipe ; it is a very extraordinary fact, Master Horton, but ever since the trial of Miles for the weaver's murder, which you doubtless remember happened many years ago, this will be the first time in which Whistlepipe has been opposed to me ; I have never forgiven him for that day's work, nor ever will, at least until I have made him look as small as his own contemptible little bit of putty of a nose. I shall conduct the whole affair in a jocular vein, but biting, sir, biting ; I can scarcely refrain, even now, from laughing at the figure he'll cut when I compel the judge to smile, and I can do it, yes, yes, sir, I can do it, and make the jury laugh, but that I can always do ; and then set the whole court in a roar, yes, sir, in a roar, at his expense. You see our case is so clear, that one may venture to give loose to the reins of our wit, and when I do, even the judge can seldom find a curb sufficiently strong to restrain it. Poor Whistlepipe ! I hope I shall not break his heart ; no, no, I'll carry my sarcasms to the very verge of annihilation, and then let the gentle hand of pity stay my caustic tongue." Horton would rather have heard a little more about his own affairs, than of nothing but the spiteful attack intended for the opposing counsel ; but as the serjeant had said their case was so clear, he left him with a confident mind.

When the merchant heard of all that had happened at the cottage, and of the second loss of his child, his agony was extreme ; he at once believed that she had been murdered by the robbers ; all hope of again beholding his adored child in life was now for ever past. As Edward and the Bridge-shooter, who were little less affected than Master Hewet, were endeavouring to console the bereaved father, by raising hopes which they themselves believed not in, they were told that a sea-faring man was waiting below and wanted to see the merchant. Edward feeling how impossible it would be for their master to receive any stranger, overwhelmed as he was with grief, descended to enquire whether he might not do as well as the merchant. He had been gone but a very few minutes, when he returned, but without entering the room further than the door, he beckoned to the Bridge-shooter, who quietly left the room.

"You must go immediately with this man," said Edward, "wherever he may take you ; he is a Dutch sailor, and jumbles his own language with the few words he knows of ours in such a manner, that it is hopeless to discover what he really means, further than that some-

body belonging to Merchant Hewet, is wanted immediately upon affairs of moment. It appears he had a letter for the merchant, but has let it fall over the Bridge and lost it."

The Bridge-shooter, who, as we have before seen, never stayed to dispute any order given him by Edward, made a very few minutes suffice for his preparation, and immediately started off with the Dutch sailor.

When Osborne returned to the merchant's room, he found him much more composed; the first flood of grief was past away, and he now determined at once to leave the Bridge and hasten to the Heath, that he might give whatever little comfort lay in his power to his beloved Alyce.

"And, besides," he said, "I must not forget, in giving way to the grief of a father, the duties of a man. I have much to say to Willy concerning Eoline, which if delayed may be their ruin. I had but just before my return learnt strange things regarding their affairs, and I came overjoyed at the discovery I had made, when your fatal news sunk my heart deep into despair."

When the merchant had gone, Edward gave way to his own wretched feelings. If he had formerly been unconscious of his love for Anne, he was so no longer; her loss, although he felt convinced she never could have been his, drove him almost to madness. Willingly would he have laid down his own life, could he have restored her to her once happy home—"I fear me much," he said, as he sat musing upon all that had lately occurred, "yes, I fear me much, that the horrid idea of her murder, which has taken possession of the merchant's mind, is but too well founded. Why did I permit her to leave the cottage? Better that we had all died together, than that she should have been thus sacrificed, and by me too. How dreadful is that thought—I, who would have died for her, have been her murderer! Yes, 'tis I, 'tis I who have destroyed her!" He clasped his hands in agony; he paced the room with uneven, but hurried steps. "If the robbers killed her, why have they hidden their bloody work?" This thought, for a moment seemed to him as a flash of inspiration—"No, no," he exclaimed, "she may yet live; had we found her mangled corse," and he shuddered from head to foot—the bare idea of looking upon that sweet form, weltering in blood, seemed too appalling for the mind to conceive—"then indeed," he continued, "we might have given way to despair, for certainty then had dug the grave of hope; but hope still lives, and I will hope yet. Why has not Willy sent me some message? only one word, even though that word had announced hope's certain death, had been better than this suspense. Hark!" he exclaimed, and then listened; "more than once I have fancied that a frenzied cry, as of some demented woman, has passed through these walls from the next dwelling. A strange place for a female to abide in—that sink of drunkenness and vice! I fear me there are strange scenes enacted there. I am almost certain I saw the very man who left us the dagger so mysteriously, come from that house; but the day had scarcely broken, and my mind was too troubled to see aught clearly; besides, at that instant I could have believed each fleeting fancy of the brain was fixed reality."

He remained for a time lost in thought, picturing to himself all the

early scenes in which he had been so happy as a boy, when first he had watched the tottering steps of the baby Anne. He had loved her from the first, but little dreamt he then that that child would one day be his heart's sole hope, and yet that heart's despair. All at once he was startled from his reverie, by hearing a strange voice close to his ear exclaim—"Be'st asleep, maister Ed'ard? so they tells I you be called."

Osborne looked towards the speaker, and there saw the country boy he had often observed about the Ferry-house at Putney.

"And what want you, my good lad?" enquired Edward.

"Oh, nothing, only you," replied the other. "Hoiy comed from the odd-looking chap that's now at the Cottage on the Heath."

Edward starting up, asked anxiously, "Had they found her?"

"No, not exactly her," said the boy; "but they a' found a summut, which hoiy'm to give to you, for you to give to Master Allen, who they now says is'n't Master Allen; it all seems plaguy rum to hoiy; there was my poor old maister that's dead and gone, father to pretty Lillia, who's dead and gone too, bless her! he turned out to be some one else. I shouldn't wonder, dang me if I should, to find that hoiy'm not Bill Bolterhead, but some great noble, or mayhap a prince—ha, ha, ha! for nobody seems to be anybody now 'o' days."

"But what is it you have to give mé? be quick, and close that monstrous mouth," said Edward, rather sharply.

"Oh! here it be's," said the boy, producing a badge, such as were then worn on the arm by serving men; as he gave it, he also delivered a note hurriedly written by the Cripple, which was to the effect—"that in again searching the line of road by which it was imagined that Anne would have endeavoured to reach the farm-house unperceived by the robbers in the rear of the cottage, they had found the ground much disturbed, as if a violent struggle had taken place there; more than one piece of torn female attire also was found lying about, and in a hedge through which a way had apparently been forced, the badge was discovered; it had evidently been torn violently from the arm, for attached to it were portions of the sleeve upon which it had originally been fastened."

When Osborne had dismissed the lad, he began to examine the badge more attentively. "It is certainly strange," he said, "that such a thing should be found in such a place; but I fear it will lead to no results favourable to our hopes: this is evidently the badge of the house of Shrewsbury, and it is not likely that any servitors of that great family would be linked with thieves; more likely one of their serving-men has offended a coy, but saucy country wench, who for having her own dress torn by his rough gallantries, has thus revenged herself on his. But, good heavens!" he exclaimed, as his mind took a frightful turn, "if Anne should have met with such a man, in such a place, and at that dead hour of the night too." He ceased to speak, for his thoughts became too horrid to give utterance to. As he stood gazing upon the badge as he held it before him by both his hands, his eye fell upon the ring young Lord George Talbot had given him some years before. "When he gave me that, he pledged to me his word, that throughout my life, if ever I should need his or his father's aid, I should not find them wanting.

I remember well his parting words—"Farewell," he said, "and believe me, the promises a Talbot makes he keeps." How little did I then think that I should ever wish to put such promise to the test, nor would I now were it to serve myself; but for her, oh! what would I not do? It will after all be no great favour to demand; but then it will clear away the doubt that haunts me. Not a moment shall be lost; I will to the Earl's and boldly crave an audience; in any case his power must greatly aid our cause." With his mind filled from this new-found spring of hope, he hurried away towards the Earl of Shrewsbury's mansion, on the banks of the Thames.

How Anne had fallen into the hands of those who now held her close prisoner may be thus explained. Nino, who was an Italian of the worst description, had, by the aid of false keys, hiding in cupboards, and thus over-hearing things that were intended for very different ears, and sundry other rascally manoeuvres, wound out nearly all his young master's secrets; amongst the rest, the place of Talbot's retreat, when he had absented himself from his father's abode, in consequence of a dispute that had arisen between the son and sire concerning a matrimonial scheme. He was not long in discovering the attachment Lord George, while disguised as Walter Lerue, had formed for the trader's daughter of the Heath, and immediately began to speculate upon the probability of turning the affair to his own benefit. With such contempt did he look upon all traders, that they appeared to him as so many animals, created but to minister to the pleasures of the great. Had he really known that simple Master Allen, was, in truth, no other but William Hewet, the King's own merchant, he might have been more cautious than to have ventured upon the last bold step he did. Once having made up his mind that something must be done to reinstate himself in the good graces of his young lord, whose estimation of him, lately, he felt had been greatly lowered, he determined to sacrifice the trader's daughter at the altar of his own advancement.—"You see," he said to Spikely, whom he had made a participator in the vile plot; "you see that although Lord George would not condescend to ask my aid in such an affair, and would fain be thought too honourable to sanction such a proceeding, he will, believe me, be mad with joy, like a child with a doll, when he finds her snug beneath his own roof; nor will he, any more than would a child, ask how the doll had been obtained. This was a glorious thought of mine, and will bring us a greater reward than we shall ever receive for anything—excepting, perhaps, for our ridding him of her again when he's tired of her; there are no two things a man will pay higher for, than the getting and getting rid of a woman. I'll marry her myself, if he'll pay enough, and I can dispose of Mona; but all that is an after matter—first we must get the girl and the reward."

So trifling an affair did the abduction of a trader's daughter appear to these worthies, feeling, as they did, quite satisfied that no one would dare to make much stir in the matter, when it was known they were protected by so powerful a name as that of Shrewsbury, that they scarcely gave the subject a second thought until the time had arrived to put the scheme into execution. There happened just at this juncture, a circumstance which at first caused Nino great annoyance, for in it

he saw much inconvenience to himself, and loss to his purse—this was the unexpected dismissal of Mona from her employ, and that dismissal had been attended with such disgrace, that it was hopeless for her to attempt to obtain a like position, at least where she was at all known. In this extremity she had flown to her lover, Nino; and he, not knowing what better to do with her, had persuaded Brassinjaw to allow her to remain, for a time, at the “Cardinal’s Hat.” Now, as in almost every unpleasant affair, when we know there is no help for it, we generally manage to discover some little palliative—something that might have been worse, and therefore, bad as it may be, it is still endurable, so did Nino draw from out his annoyance a cause for satisfaction; for it having struck him, as neither he, nor Spikely, nor, indeed, Brassinjaw, were exactly calculated to act as lady’s-maid to their intended victim, that Mona would be the very thing, and would aid them greatly in the whole affair, as she, being a woman, would understand how to attack all the weaker points of her own sex; and thus, either by flattery, or fear, or by any means she might find most applicable at the moment, render Anne subservient to their wills. When first Nino broached the business to Mona, her Italian blood flew to her heart, and filled it with jealousy, for nothing could persuade her but that the girl he was about to bring there, was one of his own victims; nor did she, to the last, give implicit credit to the tale they told her.

Fortunately for Anne, this very jealousy was a sort of safeguard to herself; for at least it protested her from the insulting approaches of the Italian ruffian.

Upon reflection Mona saw, that if, as she feared, her own charms had lost their influence over her lover, and this new fancy of his were placed within her reach, she should at least have the power of vengeance, if her worst fears proved true. It was this thought, and this only, which at last caused her to consent to the girl being brought there.

Fate seemed to be working in aid of their infamous plan, for it happened that the very night they had fixed upon for visiting the Heath, and watching their opportunity of seizing the girl and carrying her away, was the same, which another party of wretches had chosen as a fitting one, for committing the robbery of the Cottage.

By Anne having gone a very circuitous road to reach the Farm, she had, by the very precaution she was taking to avoid danger, fallen into one, that could she have known the truth, she would have regarded with a thousand times more horror than the certainty of death by the hands of the robbers.

Nino and Spikely were merely on a reconnoitering ramble, never dreaming that at such an hour of the night, the very bird they came to entrap, could by possibility have flown, as it were of her own accord, into their very arms.

Anne having left the Cottage some distance behind, now flew forward as swiftly as her limbs would carry her, and was just turning the corner of a narrow lane, when she came suddenly upon the two wretches.

Nino caught her in his arms, exclaiming—“Holloa, my pretty wench, whither so fast? ’tis late at night for petticoats to be flying about the fields—is it not?”

"For mercy's sake!" exclaimed Anne, endeavouring with all her might to free herself from his resistless grasp, "oh! for mercy's sake do not, do not detain me! I am flying for help—robbers are at the Cottage!"

"Diavolo!" ejaculated Nino, "it is the girl herself; quick, quick, away with her! Fool! why do you scream and struggle so? 'Tis useless to resist."

But Anne struggled on, and louder screamed than ever; for one moment she freed herself; but her strength was gone, and falling in a swoon upon the earth, became their unresisting prey.

When they had conveyed her to the boat, they watched for returning animation; the moment life again appeared beginning to assert its sway, they placed a draught to her lips; unconscious of what she did, she swallowed it. It was a powerful narcotic. Soon did its mysterious power lay to rest every feeling; and thus in a profound sleep was the wretched Anne conveyed to Old London Bridge.

CHAPTER XXXII.

That soundeth unto gentleness of love—
As on a tomb is all the fair above,
And under is the corpse, such as we wot;
Such was this hypocrite, both cold and hot.

CHAUCER.

WHEN Edward Osborne reached the magnificent abode of the Earl of Shrewsbury, he was greatly disappointed at hearing that neither the Earl nor his son were there. It is true, one or the other was expected daily, but the exact time at which they would arrive was unknown. Lord George, he was given to understand, had suddenly sunk into a fit of sadness so profound, that at certain moments even his physicians had fancied it would end in madness the most incurable—that of fixed melancholy. The cause of this change not even those who knew him best could account for; for now the reconciliation with his father had been happily completed, there seemed more reason than ever that his former gay and joyous disposition should not only resume its sway, but shine forth with greater brilliancy than ever; the reverse being the case, caused those around him to be lost in fruitless conjecture, and anxious solicitude. The only relief he derived was from continually moving from place to place; the moment the excitement of action ceased, the cloud was again upon him.

What had annoyed Nino most, was that he himself was never permitted to accompany his lord in these, his rambles after health—health the most difficult to attain, that of the mind. After turning over and over in his thoughts all the probable, as well as all the improbable reasons for his lord's strange manner, it struck Nino, as it would have done any man who knew aught of the world, that if we examine minutely into the causes of man's joys or miseries, there will always be found a woman at the bottom of them. It was his having come to this conclusion, that first gave him the idea, that it was not impossible that

the Beauty of the Heath might have something to do with Lord George's melancholy.

On this point he was not far wrong, but whether he saw the affair in the right light or not, coming events will show. Judging by his own nature, he at once made up his mind that if the pretty doll of the Cottage was the cause of all the mischief, why, then, possession was the speediest cure, for in his eyes, possession of the coveted object was sure to put an end to the malady of love, however strong the fit might have been. But Nino looked further, at least he fancied he did, than the mere relief he was to bring his master, for in the distance he saw a prodigious reward for himself. And now having the girl safe in his clutches, he looked upon that reward as already on its road to his own purse.

Every few hours, Osborne was again on his way to the Earl's, but for several days met with nought but disappointment. Time kept flying on, but still no tidings of poor Anne. All the robbers who had been taken were severely questioned, and in those days, to be severely questioned, meant severely tortured; but no evidence could be wrung from them to lead to the conviction, that with her abduction they were in the remotest degree connected. The evidence of each, individually, bore so strongly as to the truth of all, that it was quite clear they must look in some other quarter for a solution of the mystery regarding Anne's disappearance.

How little did Osborne imagine, that every night, as he lay his burning head upon his pillow, that head was within a few inches of her, whose recovery now seemed the sole object of his life; but so it really was, for in the very apartment of the Cardinal's Hat, which abutted upon his own, there lay the poor sufferer, in a state of stupor, for the first few hours, and for the next, under the influence of delirium, caused by the violence of the drugs she had swallowed.

All this time Horton was busily employed preparing for the coming trial, which, now he had Nan to produce, he felt certain of gaining. There was one circumstance which puzzled him greatly, and that was to observe how coolly his opponent looked upon the affair; the only conclusion he could bring his mind to was, that the opposing trustee, feeling the propriety of giving up the whole property to Horton, meant merely to come into court as a matter of form, so that at no future time, let what claimant soever spring up, he would no longer be liable to be called upon to account for the disposal of the property; in fact the trial would be his discharge in full.

When the eventful morning arrived, on which he was to become a wealthy man, he was early at the new abode of Dame Spikely, for her husband being as she believed dead, she had openly taken his name; here he stood before her door, with a retinue, if not vast in numbers, still one which cut a most respectable figure.

Having dismounted from his horse, he entered the dwelling. It was a house of some pretension, standing at the corner of Chancery Lane, opposite one of the palace-mansions of Cardinal Wolsey, and afterwards of Henry the Eighth. A portion of this palace still remains, parts of which are adorned by the usual Tudor ornaments. We shall at a future

time give a pictorial sketch of Dame Spikely's abode, when it will be found in the possession of more worthy inhabitants than herself.

"Well, Nanny," said Horton, "the hour, the eventful hour has arrived, and here am I to escort you to the Courts at Westminster. I have brought a right sober nag for you, and with our half-dozen followers, we shall show to the gapers no mean appearance."

When Nan arose, so becoming was her new attire, and so different to that in which Horton had been accustomed to behold her, that a smile of satisfaction mantled o'er his countenance. "Why, Nanny," he exclaimed, "in putting on your new mourning, you have put on a new youth. But I have noticed more than once in my life, the loss of a husband or of a wife, is a great restorer of youth to the survivor—eh, Nanny?"

Nan merely sighed, and observed, "They had other things to think of than quirks and jests."

"Well, perhaps, you are right," he replied; "it may be as well to keep our store of mirth for a later hour of the day, when we shall have had success to whet our wits. I wish I could see you smile, Nanny; but I forget, widows must clothe their looks in sadness, although their hearts be jumping with delight—looks can be seen, the heart never; and lucky it is for most, that our breasts are not made of glass, or we should often reveal what might make the face turn as red as the heart."

They were soon in the street, when, Horton, with infinite show of respect placed Dame Spikely upon her horse, which she sat to perfection; then mounting his own, they took their way towards Westminster.

When they had entered the court, Horton's previously-formed opinion as to the intentions of the man of law, to whom Andrew Horton had bequeathed his property in trust, were completely confirmed, for the first person who held out his hand to him was this very trustee, whose name was Gripclose.

"Master Horton," said Gripclose, "I hope before the trial begins, you will exonerate me from any unworthy motive, or from any wish to throw the slightest impediment in the way of the right receiving his right—no, my young friend, no. But you see an honest man, like myself, is often placed in an awkward, nay, a painful position, by circumstances; and certainly the circumstances arising out of your father's will, are enough to make my position painful. But all will no doubt be well; and if you can prove all you have undertaken to prove, and which you, no doubt, can prove, or you would not have come here, believe me, I shall be the first, after the trial, to take you by the hand, as I do now before it, to congratulate you heartily, and dine with you afterwards; ha! ha! ha! you see I am already looking out for a few of the crumbs that may fall from the rich man's table. But I beg pardon—the lady?" And he made a profound bow to Dame Spikely.

"This worthy dame," replied Horton, "is the person who can, alas! prove the death of my poor sister. How cruel was fate to keep her so many years from my knowledge, and then, when I had found her, to part us for ever in death."

"Painful indeed, painful indeed," said Gripclose, and at the same time he wiped away a tear, which Horton observing, it struck him, that a

like act on his own part would not be out of place, so he too gently passed his hand across his eyes. Nan's lip curled up, but she said nothing.

"Madam," said Gripclose, addressing Dame Spikely, "although I stand in the position of an opponent to the son of my lamented friend, Andrew Horton, I hope you will permit me the honour of leading you to the seat reserved for you, until you are called on to give evidence." Gripclose led Dame Spikely courteously to a seat, and his own having been the next, he very politely begged Horton to accept it, that he might be near his witness, and then retired.

"You see, Nanny," said Horton softly, but in a tone that evinced how pleased he was with the reception he had met with from Gripclose, "you see it is exactly as I told you it would be; we shall have merely to give our account of the wreck, and all will be over."

"Be not too sure of that," replied Nan; "had he appeared angry, or sullen, or spiteful even, I should have liked it better; but that grinning amiability I never yet found to bode much good to those upon whom it was exerted; depend upon it he has something behind, that yet may thwart you—some quibble, some quirk in the law, that he will know full well how to handle, and throw you farther back than ever."

"You do him wrong, depend upon it," said Horton, in a tone he intended to appear indifferent; but he knowing that some lawyers could in his day, be as double faced as we know them to be in our own, he felt a slight degree of doubt creep over him, which he would rather had not paid him a visit at that moment.

The case on at their entrance being one of slight importance, and of speedy settlement, the great cause of the day—but every cause is the great one of the day to those engaged in it—came on. After the nature of the case had been stated, Sergeant Thunderdown rose, and looking round, cast upon his learned friend, Whistlepipe, one of his blindest smiles, and then commenced, what he intended to have been a very long and very brilliant speech. He stated, "that the case entrusted to him was a most peculiar case—a case differing from any case he had ever before had placed in his hands. It was a will case—yes, a will case, but, unlike most will cases, in this case the will was not disputed in any case." Every time he employed the word *case*, he raised his voice to an enormous pitch, and looked sneeringly at Whistlepipe, as much as to say, "in this *case* I intend to shut you up, as sure as you've a head on your shoulders." He then went on to explain, "that Andrew Horton, deceased, had been married; that the fruits of this marriage had been two children, one a boy, the other a girl; that the girl was born blind; that this child had been lost at a very tender age; that the father had grieved almost to death at the loss of this child; that he would never be persuaded but that one day or another she would be recovered; that it was under these strong feelings of parental love and pity for her blindness, that he had caused the will to be drawn up in the shape it had been. The clause upon which the whole case turned was this—that Andrew Horton, believing that his daughter would one day be discovered, had left nearly the whole of his wealth away from his son for *mistaken* reasons, upon which he need not then dwell, and had placed it in trust

to accumulate for the sole use and benefit of the said daughter, to be rendered up to her at any time she might be discovered; or in case of her not being discovered during twenty years after the death of the testator, then, and not till then, the property was to go to the son, Henry Horton, *unless*—now mark this word,” said the sergeant, repeating it again and again, “*unless* it can be clearly proved that the lost or stolen child be dead.—Now the first thing we have to prove is whether the child was born or not.”

“There is every reason,” interrupted Whistlepipe, “according to the natural history of the production of the human species, to believe that the child was born, and I am led to this conclusion by the fact of the child having been stolen, for had it not been born, it could not have been stolen.” To this argument the judge shut his eyes, and gave a formal nod of assent. “Therefore,” continued Whistlepipe, delighted at the approval of the judge, “we admit the birth, brother Thunderdown, we admit the birth.”

“I am glad of that,” replied the sergeant, “for it will save much of the time of the court, for it is not always an easy matter to prove that any man has been born. I remember a case——”

“You need not trouble yourself,” said the judge, who had a horror of Thunderdown’s cases; “the point is admitted, go on.”

“The next point we have to prove, is the discovery of the blind child by her brother, Henry Horton, in the late Nunnery of the Minorites.”

“We admit that fact,” again interrupted Whistlepipe.

“I’m glad of that,” replied the sergeant, “for I remember a case——”

“The point is admitted,” again said the judge.

“Then,” said the sergeant, “the two points being admitted—first, the birth of the child, and then the discovery of the child, all I have to prove is the death of the child—yes, the death!” Here he stooped forward and whispered to Horton, “Now for the fun!”

Horton could not help thinking, that while proving a death, it was an odd time to choose to be funny; but he made no reply.

Thunderdown said—“The court, he was sure, would forgive him being a little lengthy in his remarks, for he shrewdly suspected his learned brother did not intend to allow him a reply; therefore all he had to say he must say now, and if he were a little sarcastic upon one or two points, he hoped his learned friend would take all in good part. Had his friend, Whistlepipe, intended to produce witnesses——”

“And so I do,” observed Whistlepipe.

“You do?” ejaculated the sergeant, and then, most unprofessionally, inquired, “and to what end?”

To this question Whistlepipe made no reply; upon which Thunderdown again lent forward, and a great deal of whispering went on between him and Horton. “But you told me that we should have merely to walk over the course,” said the sergeant.

“So he led me to believe,” whispered Horton; “but no witnesses can disprove the loss of the ship, and the death of all on board.”

Nan, too, began to feel fidgetty, and wished herself anywhere but in a court of justice. Thunderdown, being taken off his guard, forgot all his beautiful sarcasms, and began to think of the most cautious manner

in which to carry on the case, now it had taken a different turn to what he had been lately led to believe by Horton; but knowing it would never do to show his annoyance, he put on a smiling face, and told his learned brother "how delighted he should be to be introduced to any friends he might think proper to present; and as he should, under these circumstances, have a future opportunity of again addressing the court in his reply, he should at once call his witness to prove the death of Eoline. He could call but one witness, for the grim monster, death, had in his often-assumed disguise of the raging, roaring, angry waves, swallowed up every living soul on board the ill-fated ship, excepting the witness whose life seemed as if saved, in order that justice should be done to his worthy client." He then explained, "that this lady was the widow of a distinguished officer, who had died on the glorious battle-field, and whose station in life was such, that no doubt could possibly be raised as to the implicit credence that should be given to all she said."

Dame Spikely was now brought forward for examination. The moment she stood forth, there came from the centre of the crowded court, one short horrid laugh. "Order!" roared out the crier. Horton started up, and ran to Nan—"What ails you, Nanny?" he said, in a low voice.

"Are you *sure* he's dead?"

"*Sure!*" replied Horton, and seeing Nan had somewhat resumed her composure, he again took his seat.

Nan's eyes from the moment she had heard that laugh, never for an instant ceased wandering about the court, as if in search of some dreaded object.

The questions to be asked, were so clearly and carefully laid before the examining counsel, that Nan had scarcely more to say than "yes, or no," as the case might be; and the circumstance of the wreck being such a well-known fact, there was no doubt at that moment on the minds of all who heard her, nor was there on her own, but that Eoline had perished with her husband, and the rest of those on board.

To Thunderdown's great astonishment, Whistlepipe never once attempted to cross-question her; therefore the case seemed clear, and Thunderdown sat down perfectly satisfied that all was well.

When Whistlepipe arose, he began his address by complimenting Dame Spikely upon the clear and straightforward evidence she had given, and that he allowed her full credit for believing every word she had uttered—"But," said he, "how often does truth appear unlike herself, or rather, how often does error look like truth. Now I shall be able to prove that not one word concerning the death of the blind girl is true." This assertion caused a great sensation, and Whistlepipe went on—"I always go," said he, "to the fountain head at once, therefore the witness I shall produce to prove the existence of the lady in question, will be——" he paused, so that what he was about to say might produce its full effect, and then in a powerful manner, exclaimed—"the lady herself!"

Upon saying this, the beautiful blind Eoline was brought forward, to the horror of Horton, the surprise of Nan, and the admiration of all who looked upon her. The strange sound she heard startled her, and the lids of her beautiful eyes arose, displaying such orbs of brightness,

that every one seemed to doubt the possibility of her blindness. That she was the person saved from the wreck, was soon made manifest by the evidence of the merchant and his brave companions.

There was but one chance now left for Horton, and that at the first glance appeared a strong one; namely, that of obliging the adverse party to prove that Eoline was really the lost child of Andrew Horton; that had not yet been proved, and it seemed rather that that should have been the first point to be attended to by the defendant's counsel; for, as it was argued by Thunderdown, who now insisted upon quoting various cases he well remembered, in which it was laid down, and clearly laid down too, that—"mere assertion was no proof."

The learned judge at first thought he should like to reserve that point for further consideration; but presently, having turned over various books, and then having argued the question well in his own mind, came to the conclusion that the opinion of former judges need not be reversed, for he felt with them, that mere assertion was not proof; it then did certainly lie with the defendant to prove, that the claimant he brought forward in the person of a certain blind girl named Eoline, was herself, and no other, the child of the deceased Andrew Horton.

This appeared a most difficult point to get over, so Horton and the sergeant imagined; and with that difficulty their courage again arose.

Whistlepipe confessed he was placed in a position of some awkwardness, and begged for a few moments to consult with his client.

The judge, who with the jury were beginning to feel a little hungry, consented to allow ten minutes, and that the jury might retire and take a slight refreshment.

"You see," said Whistlepipe to his client, and to the merchant, and indeed to all who were interested on his side, "you see, the fact of the girl being herself was so perfectly, though tacitly admitted to be herself, that had not that deep scoundrel, Thunderdown, who, I must confess, is never at a loss, had he not raised this objection, all would have been well; but what to do is now a difficult question."

The only evidence they could bring forward was the Cripple. It is true that the Abbess had lately informed him of the secret of Eoline's birth, but she had never explained how she became acquainted with the fact; and even if she had, his evidence would have been regarded with a very jealous eye, he being so deeply interested in the success of Eoline, she being his wife. Slender as the hope was, it was all they had now to rely on, and so it was determined that the Cripple should be examined as to all the late Abbess had ever revealed to him upon that subject.

When the judge returned, he came in evidently in good humour with whatever he had been taking, and soundly smacked his lips, and the clerks smacked their lips, and the jury smacked their lips, and there was a wonderful twisting about of mouths, as is generally the case with most people for some minutes after eating. Silence being called, the case proceeded.

Whistlepipe said—"That although he had been taken by surprise, he

still felt confidently he should produce good proof of the identity of the claimant."

The Cripple was then examined, but all he could say was that a short time before they had sailed from abroad in the fated ship which had been wrecked, and in which the Abbess had perished, she had told him that Eoline was really the daughter of Andrew Horton; that this revelation had been led to in consequence of the discovery of some documents, amongst which was a will like the one that had been produced, and it was to lay claim to the property bequeathed in that will, that they had taken this voyage to England.

When he had concluded, Whistlepipe made the most of every word; but the judge interrupting him, and shaking his head, said—"I am afraid, brother Whistlepipe, if this be all the evidence you can produce, you must give in; in such a case as the present, the proof of identity should be most powerful; and here, we do not even know—supposing the last witness to have spoken the truth—we do not even know how the Abbess was aware that Eoline was the child of Horton. It is unfortunate in your case that the Abbess could not be produced; but as the affair stands——" and again he shook his head.

While the judge and Whistlepipe were arguing the point, Horton and the sergeant were beginning to collect their papers, regarding the cause really at an end.

Just at this moment the Bridge-shooter put his head in at the side door, and having caught the eye of the merchant beckoned him out.

In a few minutes, the merchant returned, and whispered a few words to their counsel.

Sergeant Thunderdown being impatient to let off his sarcasms in a volley and go home, asked his learned friend—"If that was his case?"

Whistlepipe replied—"Not quite; I have one witness more to examine. Call in Elizabeth Savage, late Abbess of the Poor Clares."

The astonishment and despair of Horton can easily be imagined; the feelings of Nan were scarcely less harrowing.

In a few minutes and again the door opened, and the Abbess, who appeared half dead from illness, brought on by her sufferings during and after the storm, was carried in, seated in a chair. She was allowed to retain her seat, indeed, it was evident to all that it would be impossible for her to stand. The disclosures she now made astonished all, but none more so than Horton himself; for upon being asked her name, she answered—"I was called Elizabeth Savage; but that is not my name. Must I confess my real one?—but it is better that I should at once—it will make all clearer—simpler. I am Eoline Horton, and that blind girl is my own child."

A strange scene here took place, for Eoline hearing the well-known voice, sounding as though it had risen from the grave to claim her for her child, forced her way to the spot whence these happy sounds had sprung, and falling on her knees, clung to her mother in an almost agony of rapture.

Every word the Abbess now uttered, created a deepening interest. She explained how the shattered boat in which she lay, as in death, had been cast upon the shore: that by the care of those who found her,

her life had been preserved ; that believing herself upon the bed of death, she had prepared a full account of all she was then relating, and that it was to deliver up this document she had sent for the merchant ; but in consequence of the foreign sailor having lost her letter, all were kept ignorant of whom had sent it, until the Bridge-shooter had reached her place of refuge.

It was soon found that her strength would never hold out to the end, so it was arranged that her written narrative should be read aloud, and that then she could, as it proceeded, make any observation she might think fit ; it ran thus :—

“THE CONFESSION OF A SINNER.”

“In very early life I was married, by compulsion, to a man I never loved ; but he was rich, and riches, in my father’s eyes, were parent to all virtues. The man I married was Andrew Horton, a cold-hearted, violent, unfeeling monster, who cared not whom he sacrificed, so that his own desires were accomplished. Wretched indeed was soon my fate. Ere long, I found that his pretended affection for me, was but one of his thousand fancies ; I had been coveted by others, therefore I was coveted by him. Weeks and months rolled on ; every succeeding one more wretched than the last. I now became a mother ; my infant, a boy, was, almost as soon as born, removed from me, and placed under the care of one of his other victims ; she was a poor weak girl, whose bright blue eyes had caught his fancy ; she was placed as a nurse to my child, and with her sister, dwelt beneath the same roof with his insulted, neglected wife. The next year of my life was one of unceasing tears ; to such an excess did the heart’s pure springs o’erflow, that for weeks I have frequently been totally blind from weeping ; it was in this miserable state I bore a daughter ; the temporary blindness of the parent fixed itself for ever upon the child—she was born sightless. My existence became a torture to me ; all I prayed for was to die. At last driven to madness by insult and oppression, I fled my husband’s home for ever. There was little need of great precaution to keep hidden my place of refuge, for well I knew he would make but little effort to recover me ; he was tired of me, and therefore was thankful for any chance that should rid him of “his curse,” as he always called me. I entered the abode of the poor Clares ; circumstances combined to make me soon the head of that house. One night I pretended to have found a poor blind orphan, but it was false, for the girl I brought was my own child ; this pretended orphan was my double comfort, for I soon learnt that the only chord of my husband’s heart that could be touched, I had torn to threads, by taking away his child ; this was indeed a solace, but a wicked one ; the other comfort was a mother’s love being rewarded by a darling child’s affection.”

The narrative then went on to describe those scenes which the reader has already been made acquainted with ; such as the visit of Horton as a commissioner of Cromwell, and how she had checked his licentious course by whispering in his ear that Eoline was his sister, although it was long before known to her that Horton was no child of hers ; for, as Nan had truly stated to him, his real mother had taken refuge in the

Convent of the Minories, and, it now appeared, had, on her death-bed revealed the truth of the changing of the children. But here followed a passage in the Abbess's narrative which truly astonished those who heard it, for it stated that the rich old man, who had taken a liking to, and had, in fact, bought the true offspring of Andrew Horton, and had with it gone to Italy, passing the boy off as his own son and heir, was a baronet named Filbut Fussey, at whose death, the boy, now grown to man's estate, unconscious of doing wrong, and unopposed by any of the relations of his supposed father, laid claim to, and enjoyed all the old man's vast possessions. Thus it appeared that Eoline and the murdered knight were, in truth, brother and sister, and that Harry Horton in no way could lay claim to inherit any portion of the wealth left by Andrew Horton. So well had the Abbess digested her plans to secure to her daughter her rights, that in one part, where confirmation was required of assertions that might appear doubtful without a witness, forth stepped the once-saintly father Brassinjaw, who, as former confessor of the poor Clares, disclosed as much (and perhaps a little more), as his priestly oath of secrecy would permit; but in the case of the death-bed confession of Nan's sister, what she had then revealed, was not for the purpose of obtaining absolution, but that those who heard it might one day bear witness to the truth.

The moment Brassinjaw had been informed that his evidence was to ruin Horton, he flew to the task with all the appetite with which we might imagine a hawk would pounce upon a poor defenceless sparrow. It must be owned that Brassinjaw cut but a rather unbecoming figure, for having a wish to give as much weight as he could to his evidence, by putting on a solemn and devout appearance, he had shaved off as much of his beard and his whiskers as his vanity would permit, and wore, as it were, a pied-bald suit of clothes—half saint, half sinner; the very few remains of his former priestly gear he had donned for the occasion, not remembering, at the moment, how ill they agreed with the attributes of a publican. But he performed his part so well, that there could be no doubt concerning the truth of every portion of the Abbess's narrative.

So absorbed had Nan now been in painful reflections, caused by the unexpected public disclosures that were sounding in her ears, that she was quite unconscious of Harry Horton having, unnoticed by any one, left the court; she felt sick at heart, and turning to speak to Horton as she thought, she found a stranger by her—one glance—then uttering a piercing shriek, flew from the court as in a fit of frightful madness. In the confusion that ensued, the cause of her alarm also made his retreat, but not before the Bridge shooter had noticed him sufficiently to make him feel convinced, that that man, and the mysterious stranger who left the dagger, were the same.

Thunderdown, feeling how completely he had been crushed, put on his usual show of virtuous indignation, and dashing down his brief, complained bitterly of the manner in which he had been deceived by his client; and then closely folding his arms, as if wrapping himself up in his own integrity, he too left the court.

A very short time sufficed to conclude the rest of the affair; and with

comparatively light hearts, the Cripple with his, now rich wife, accompanied by their friends, quitted the justice court—we say, with comparatively light hearts, for the uncertain fate of the merchant's daughter could not but cast a damp upon their otherwise boundless joy.

Osborne, whose attendance had not been required, was during the trial prosecuting his enquiries in every quarter the most likely, and even the most unlikely, to gain information regarding the lost Anne: he even consulted the Bridge-shooter's mother, who, this time, honestly confessed herself at fault; but, as she said, no wonder that her eyes, regarding futurity, should have become dim, since now she could only look through a veil of tears, shed for her departed spirit: by this she meant, that her old black cat was dead, and she now began to persuade herself that with her "spirit," her own supernatural powers had ceased to exist.

It was after this visit to the witch of Houndsditch, that Edward had gone to the Earl's mansion. He was ushered into a magnificent gallery, hung round with portraits of the Earls of Shrewsbury, and pictures of many of the great actions of their lives. He had been waiting some time, when, hearing a door open at the opposite end of the gallery to that by which he had entered, and by which the attendant had gone out, he turned suddenly, and felt perfectly bewildered, for there, before him, stood Walter Lerue, splendidly attired. Lerue appeared to Osborne to start back at seeing him, and then became almost as much confused as he himself was. The fact was Lord George had not yet been apprized of Osborne's visit, so that meeting him unexpectedly in his father's mansion, it had startled him, he scarcely knew wherefore, unless indeed that his masquerading must now be confessed, and that in such confession he felt his dignity would, in a degree, suffer humiliation.

After a moment's hesitation, caused by feeling a jealousy rising in his heart at being thus near a rival, Osborne said—"I but little expected to meet with Master Lerue in this mansion—nor—indeed—that is—I was told to await here the coming of the Earl, or of his son—and——"

"And you are welcome, Master Edward Osborne," said Lord Talbot, having recovered from his surprise, and as he advanced, he held forth his hand to Osborne, which the latter took, but with evident reluctance. "If your heart were as bad as your memory," said his lordship, "you would be a much worse man than you ever will be. Look at me again; we are old friends, are we not?"

"Once meeting for an hour at the Cottage on the Heath," replied Edward, "is scarcely intercourse sufficient to form an acquaintanceship, much less cement a friendship."

"Tut, man," said the other; "why, you cannot surely forget when we were boys, we went bathing together, and i'faith, but for your timely aid, I had once taken a bath too much off Battersea." Hearing these words, Osborne for the first time looked really at the features of the speaker. "Be not surprised, in finding in Master Lerue the heir of Shrewsbury. My memory, Master Osborne, is far better than your own; but no wonder in this case, for noble minds easily forget the favours they have bestowed, but honest ones never forget the favours they have received. I remember too that you have a ring of mine, and have no doubt come to claim the promise made, when that ring was given. What favour

would you ask? 'tis granted ere it be spoken; but do not think it will be gratuitously bestowed. No, no, indeed!" and his lordship's hitherto pale and melancholy features, for a moment were lighted by a smile. "I shall in return demand a favour of Master Osborne, and one that will in my mind far outweigh any obligation Lord Talbot can ever grant. But first to discharge my debt to my preserver, if indeed he has brought in his heavy account against me, and having done that, or paid an instalment, we will then speak of our departed acquaintance, Walter Lerue. Speak, what can I do to serve you?"

Edward was so completely thrown off his balance, as one might say, by this unexpected discovery, that he could scarcely stand upright.

Lord George perceiving this, pushed forward a magnificent seat, and drawing another near to it, said—"As I hope this visit will not be a short one, let us be seated, for though you may have but little to say, I have much, and that, too, of some moment: be seated and speak freely—you have a willing listener.

Edward now began to tell his tale by saying—"You, my lord, having already been somewhat acquainted with the inmates of the Cottage on the Heath, will doubtless be surprised to learn that he who owned that Cottage, was not Master Allen, an humble trader as he there appeared, but——"

"Master William Hewet, the King's great merchant," interrupted Lord Talbot. "You see I know more than you suspected, do I not?"

"Heaven grant that you may know how to discover the treasure Master Hewet has, I fear, for ever lost!"

"What treasure has that worthy merchant lost?" enquired the other.

"His child!" said Osborne, and he felt ready to choke as he spoke the words.

"His child!" exclaimed the young lord, "lost his child, that loveliest of all created beings? Speak, speak, surely I must misunderstand your words."

"Alas!" replied Edward, "they are too plain, too true, to admit of but one meaning." Edward then recounted the whole of the incidents connected with the attack of the robbers; and that after Anne had left the cottage, in the endeavour to reach the farm unobserved, she had never again been seen. "When you bestowed upon me this ring, you told me, that whenever I required aid, I was to claim it here."

"Whatever aid, I, or my house, can bring, will be brought right willingly, for I have other reasons for feeling anxious on that fair maid's account, then you at present guess at. But how can we hope to solve the mystery?"

"There is a slight chance of obtaining a clue, by the aid of this badge—it is the badge of your noble house." Saying this, he produced the badge, and then explained the circumstances under which it had been found.

"There is more knavery in this," said Lord Talbot, "than we shall perhaps ever fathom; but I think I have a knave that will ferret it out—at least as much as mortal depth can fathom or ferret out; he is my

varlet—by name Nino, an Italian rogue, who, because he did me a service when in Italy, has ever since stuck to me as a blood-sucker.”

The young lord went to a side door, within which, at a couple of feet distance, was another door; he opened this also, and then calling the Italian by his name, Nino appeared.

Nino now put on a very different bearing to that which he assumed when with his equals or inferiors in station; he carried himself so humbly, and threw such an expression of simplicity into his countenance, that few, but those who knew him as thoroughly as his lord did, would have suspected him of being the rogue he really was.

Lord Talbot, holding the badge up suddenly before Nino's eyes, exclaimed—“Whose badge is that?”

“Whose, my lord?”

“Yes, whose? There needs no thinking—answer!”

The young lord asked the question thus suddenly, hoping, that did Nino know aught concerning it, he would be taken off his guard, and thus betray himself; but in this he was wrong, for Nino at once answered—“Why, yours, my lord!”

“I know 'tis mine,” replied the other; “but would know who wore it last, and lost it? Had my orders been obeyed, and the badges numbered, we should have known at once whose it was.”

“I know,” said Nino; “it is doubtless the badge of Phillip of the Buttery: he absconded a fortnight since with Mona, our lady's woman; fearful of discovery, he has torn the badge from his arm, and cast it away.”

“It may have been as he says,” observed Lord Talbot, addressing Osborne. “You may be gone.”

Nino bowed humbly, and retired through the door he had entered by.

“I fear me we shall trace but little by this badge; but this I promise, that not an engine of power, that is likely to avail us, but shall immediately be set in motion. And now to the favour I would ask of you; but, for the present, you must pledge me your word not to breath it to mortal ear.” Having said this, he rose, and cautiously approaching the door through which Nino had passed, flung it suddenly open, when there stood, in the space between the two doors, the Italian Nino.

Had Lord Talbot been armed, so great was his rage, that the Italian's life would, in all probability, have paid the forfeit for his evesdropping; as it was, the young lord seized him by the throat, then cast him backwards with such violence, against the inner doors, that they gave way, and Nino fell violently upon the floor of the outer room.

“Scoundrel!” exclaimed Lord Talbot, “I have often suspected this, but never could catch you till now. Be gone! never dare to step foot again within these walls!” He paced up and down two or three times, and then resuming his seat, said—“Fogave me, Master Osborne, for being thus ruffled by such a hind as that; but I shall smile at my own passion presently, and will then proceed with what I would have you know. No doubt, but indeed I am sure, you must have been surprised to find, that the poor artist of the Heath, and the boy you saved, were one, and that one—Lord Talbot! 'Tis right that I explain to you how

all this came to pass; for, believe me, no unworthy motive caused me to assume another name, however unkindly terminated some circumstances to which that change has led."

Osborne, who was yet unacquainted with the real cause of poor Lillia's death, could not comprehend to what his noble friend alluded; but soon he was doomed to hear that which he could comprehend, alas! too well.

The young lord proceeded—"It was a difference I had had with my father, that made me, for a time, wish to live in retirement—indeed, from him, in concealment. I assumed the character of an artist, being a great lover of the art, though but a poor executant, put up at the Ferry, and strolled about the country with my gun and my drawings, and killed time as well as I could. In one of my rambles, I saw the 'Beauty of the Heath,' for so sweet Mistress Anne was called all the country round; I was enraptured. But who could look upon her, and not be so?"

Poor Osborne could not help thinking the speaker was quite right. But what could he have been about all this number of years, that he had been blessed by seeing her, speaking to her, serving her, and yet never to discover her excellencies, until another pointed them out to him.

"You doubtless, know that fate at last placed an opportunity in my way, of being of some slight service to her: I seized that opportunity of becoming more intimate, and every moment I was near her, I discovered, not only in her features, but in her mind, new beauties. I knew the folly of giving way to feelings that, in spite of all my efforts to prevent them, would keep rising in my heart; I took myself to task severely; but the more I strove to convince myself of my weakness, for our stations being so widely different, that of an earl's son and a poor trader's daughter, that an honourable love seemed madness; and who could dare to love that sweet girl but honourably? You look astonished that I should be thus frank and open to you; but all I now say, is said to lead to the favour I intend to demand at your hands."

Poor Edward sat and listened, wondered, and inwardly groaned, for it was evident that the young lord had, at least, cast a longing eye upon his heart's adored. What was to be the end of this long introduction, he was quite at a loss to imagine.

"The unexpected meeting with the merchant on the evening you saw me at the cottage, and whom I instantly recognised as Master Hewet—but he knew not me: not so that quick-eyed jade, Flora—she was not deceived for one moment—I assumed all the appearance of indifference I could command; but I inwardly felt, that that night must break the spell that I had too long allowed to surround me: I left the cottage, never to return to it—exerted all my reason to combat the violent passion, which had so nearly conquered me; but now I had determined never more to think of the 'Beauty of the Heath,' the more would her image rise, like the fairy form of a dream, and engross my every thought."

Osborne, as he listened, almost fancied he was hearing his own story related, so exactly did the feelings, painted by the young lord, coincide with his own. But again he asked himself—"How is this strange tale to end?" He was not long left in doubt, for the other continued.

"I wandered about—flew from place to place: my friends became anxious, for none could guess the cause of my altered state of mind. I have ever noticed; that the strongest attachments invariably take root where such feelings should never know existence. I could command the wealthiest, the proudest, the most exalted beauties of the land; but they are not the simple 'Beauty of the Heath'; the remembrance of her brightness throws all others in the shade: into such a pitch of phrenzy has this short absence cast me, that I now feel that life with her, or death without her, must be my fate: I have, therefore, determined to demand her hand!"

So astonished was poor Osborne at hearing these last words, that he actually fell back on his seat, and stared his eyes nearly out of his head at the young lord, without uttering a single word.

"I see you are astonished," said Lord Talbot, "and I wonder not that you should be; but when you remember all her charms of mind, of form, of face, your wonder soon will cease. The world will stare, and gape, I know. But what is the world to him, who must quit that world, unless the life which can alone make that world endurable, is sustained by the love of her, in whose love alone he will consent to live. Now, the favour I would ask of you, is this; but, alas! I had forgotten she is lost—lost, perhaps, to us all for ever——"

Osborne was too much bewildered by his own miserable thoughts to reply. The confession he had just heard, and the expressed determination of the heir of Shrewsbury, to demand the hand of Anne, if she should be found, seemed a death-blow to his very existence.—"Now then," he said, within himself, "now then, this land and I am strangers indeed. The moment Anne be restored, if ever she should be, that moment shall see me set my foot upon a bark, to bear me away for ever."

The young lord paced up and down in violent agitation, and then exclaimed, as if speaking to himself—"Not a nook, not a dwelling, of high or low, but shall be searched, and searched thoroughly too, but we will find her, or those who have wronged her; I have power, and that power shall be used to find out the truth of this mystery. You now know," he said, addressing Osborne, "the secret feelings of my mind; keep them, at present, locked in your own breast; but the moment sweet Anne shall be restored, it is upon you I depend; you must plead my cause—you must discover for me the inward feelings of her heart, for I cannot stoop to ask and be rejected. In the meantime, be sure that every nerve of mine will be exerted to discover the retreat, or fate of sweet Anne Hewet. I will so arrange, that you shall always find me at a moment's notice."

Osborne, considering the extraordinary turn matters had taken, to that which he had believed his visit would lead to, managed to leave the young lord's presence with tolerable composure; but the moment he found himself alone, in the grounds that led to the boat in which he was to return, he hurried into a concealed alcove, and gave full vent to his sorrow.—"Now," he exclaimed, "now indeed may I write upon my heart, 'hope dwells not here!'"

We will not attempt to depict all his agony. If any thing could have

blighted the little hope he formerly might have pictured to himself—and who, in this world, but will, at times, picture hope to their sinking hearts?—that last ray of hope was dimmed, extinguished, by the knowledge of one so great as the young lord he had just left, having determined to offer his wealth and name to the merchant's daughter.

"But I will never see that day—no, no, I will never see that day. Religion forbids us to take the life which Heaven has bestowed upon us; but religion does not forbid our tying from the cause of all our woes."

While so many were employed in various districts, endeavouring to discover the lost Anne, she was a prisoner within an arm's length of those who dwelt in the house of her birth upon the Bridge. When she had been brought to the Cardinal's Hat, she was at once conveyed to the upper room of the house; for this room being lighted by a skylight only, it would be impossible for any one confined there to discover, from outward views, where their prison lay. After the powerful draught she had swallowed began to lose its narcotic virtue, returning sense began to assert its sway. The first time she opened her eyes with real consciousness—for all she had before beheld, whenever her sleepful eyelids rose, was so dreamy in effect, that it could scarcely be said she saw, or knew aught of what she looked upon around her—but, as we have just observed, the first time real consciousness held power o'er her vision, her eyes met those of Mona, who had been incessantly watching over her from the night on which she had been brought there. Anne started from her couch and screamed.

"What are you afraid of, child?" said Mona.

"Afraid of!" ejaculated Anne; "but who are you? and how came I in this wretched place?" She then shut her eyes again for a moment: then, opening them, looked around doubtingly, as though she half fancied she still was in a dream—"Do not look so strangely at me; but speak, speak! where am I?"

"Were I to tell you, perhaps those who brought you here," said Mona, "might think my tongue an inch too long, and cut it off."

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Anne, placing both her hands upon her forehead, "what a frightful thought flies through my brain. I remember now the dreadful struggle on the Heath. Oh, tell me, tell me! am I indeed within the power of those wretches?"

"Hush!" whispered Mona. "A villain never likes to hear himself called a villain—speak lower. I have been watching, anxiously watching for your returning sense; for in your delirium you have uttered words and names that make me believe the truth has not been told me: speak lowly, but *truly*, and you may perhaps have found a friend in one, who to herself has never been a friend—You love!"

Anne blushed, and looking enquiringly into the face of the Italian girl, answered—"I do! but you and myself are the only two who know it."

"And the name of him you love is —"

Anne again blushed as she almost whispered—"Edward; but why do you ask?"

"Because I fancy I am to be deceived, and made a fool of," replied



The Suppliant

Mona, frowning as few but an Italian can frown; "that was the name you muttered so frequently when your mind was wandering, and made me doubt their tale. They told me his name was George, and that he was a noble of this land."

"George!" said Anne, "I know no human being bearing that name; and never, to my knowledge, spoke a word to mortals above my own humble state."

"Then it is a lie!" exclaimed Mona, starting up, "but a lie that shall stick in his throat until it choke him. I have been too bitterly deceived by him, to be deceived by him again: One way or other, I am to be fooled, and you made their victim!"

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed the affrighted girl, springing from the couch on which she had been lying, and casting herself upon her knees before the still-frowning Mona. "Oh, save me, save me! I know not where I am—I know not where to look for safety but in you: then, save me, save me!"

The room in which this scene was enacting, was an oddly-shaped apartment at the top of Brassinjaw's dwelling. There was but little furniture in the place; but what there was, was of massive structure. The place was at all times in parts quite dark; the only light coming through a small skylight in the roof. Beneath this skylight, a sort of gallery passed across, forming a communication between two lofts.

Just as Anne had thrown herself upon her knees, and seized the hand of the Italian girl, a huge ill-looking head might have been seen obtruding from one of the doors at one end of the shattered gallery. It was Brassinjaw, who, like Mona, began to suspect that he was being made a dupe of, and who determined to learn the truth for himself, as far as he could, by listening to all the Italian and the trader's daughter they had stolen away, might say to each other, and, by this means, learn how best to act, for his own advantage.

So eloquently did Anne plead her own cause—so feelingly did she picture the suffering she too well knew her poor mother was then enduring—the agony of her broken-hearted father—the mention of the father's woe, appeared to touch a chord in Mona's breast, whose vibrations thrilled through every fibre of her softened heart, and called up visions of days gone by—visions that memory's eye could never look on but in tears, that she raised the imploring girl—then buried her own face upon the shoulder of Anne, as through a flood of grief she exclaimed—"I know, I know! oh, it was of a broken heart my father died; and I it was who broke it!"

It now became Anne's turn to offer consolation; but this she found a more difficult matter than might have been expected, for Mona kept exclaiming—" 'Tis useless, useless! remorse can *never* know relief. Oh, remorse! remorse! thou art the bitterest drug that ever poisons the human heart! No, remorse can never know relief!"

All this time Brassinjaw continued to be all ears. He strained every nerve not to lose a word; but presently he made a discovery that somewhat alarmed him.

Mona having partially recovered, said—"I have not been thus moved for many a day; the voice of remorse can only be drowned by wild ex-

citement ; to this I have, for some time past, given way, and for that time I fancied I had forgotten ; but being alone watching your slumbers for so long, I had time to think, and all the ghosts of former days rose up before me ; all that you said in your delirious dreams, brought back to recollection, that I too had once a home—a happy sunny home ; I too had once been blessed by a doting parent ; I too had loved, but therein lay my curse ! So blindly mad with love was I for Nino (that was my lover's name) that all warnings proved of no avail ; at last I fled with him, to follow him to this distant land ; but I would have followed him into the fiery gulph ; while I believed he loved me : he made of me whatsoe'er he would, even to become a thief : it was this last vile act that tore from my eyes the blinding scales, and I now see myself, and all the vile acts I have done, in their full deformity. Although I am now convinced he no longer loves me, the recollection of our early days of affection still clings around my heart, and for a moment seems to bind me to him ; but that slight bond I have vowed to break. It is my fixed resolve to return to my native country, though I should beg my bread at each step I go. I will sin no more. All I pray for now is to be suffered by heaven to crawl to my father's grave and die. But you must first be saved ; your salvation shall prove a slight atonement for one who has done wrong, not loving wrong, but through loving wrongly."

"Oh, bless you, bless you!" exclaimed Anne, throwing her arms round the neck of the Italian girl, "oh, bless you! and know, that if you but save me from the peril I feel I am now encompassed by, no lack of means will have to be endured throughout your journey to your native land, though that journey should extend to thrice the distance round the globe."

"Then are you not the daughter of a poor trader of the name of Allen?" enquired Mona.

"Allen is a name by which I have for some few years been known," replied Anne, "but Allen is not my real one." Here Brassinjaw strained his neck over the railing of the gallery. "No, so far from being the child of a poor trader, I am the only daughter of one of the richest merchants of this great city—William Hewet, merchant to the king." A little dash of pride animated Anne's countenance as she announced her high respectability, for which, in the next moment, she blushed. "You talk of saving me," she continued, "but how? you are I fear almost as much a prisoner as I; but if you could reach his house, alas! I fear far, far away from here, his house on Old London Bridge——"

"Where?" interrupted Mona, "where did you say?"

"On Old London Bridge," replied Anne; "reach but that, and you will easily find it, for his house is well known there; it stands next to a wine-shop called the Cardinal's Hat."

"Hush," whispered the Italian girl, "we are speaking too loudly—be calm, for what I am about to tell you, might, without warning, prove too much for you to hear. Your father's house is there." And Mona pointed with her thumb over her shoulder towards the wall.

"There! what mean you?" exclaimed Anne, feeling there was something in the word she could not comprehend.

"There," repeated Mona, again pointing with her thumb, "there,

within a foot of you, is the scene of your birth; this is the wine-house you have named."

Anne was about to utter an exclamation of joy and surprise, but was checked by Mona. "That they have brought you here, is a proof they know you not: be silent, for in silence is your only hope; did they but once suspect who, and what you really are, their idea of safety would be in your destruction."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Anne, in a voice subdued by alarm and deepened by fear; "and am I truly so near all that is dear to me—all that would shield me, yet dare I not fly to that love—to that protection?"

"Dissimulation is your only hope; I must appear to know nothing, and when I find the opportunity, I will hence—disclose to your friends your peril, then look to them and Heaven for my own safety."

"A swifter plan for our release," said Anne, still almost whispering, "I think I can devise. If this be the house you say it is, there is outside that door—for from that skylight, I imagine this to be the highest room—a staircase leading to yon gallery, which thence leads to the roof; you look astonished at my knowledge of this locality, but by that very stair, some years now gone, I verily believe I did descend to seek for safety, as I now shall mount it in the self-same hope."

"Such a stair does exist," said Mona, "and I comprehend your meaning: not a moment must be lost; we must find safety now or never."

Clinging together, the Italian girl and Anne hastened towards the door—they opened it, when, horror! there stood Spikely, Brassinjaw, and the Italian Nino.

"So so, my mistress," said Nino, addressing Mona, "you would betray your lover, would you?—fly from him—eh?—But you are easily dealt with." Saying which, he suddenly cast a rope with a slip-knot on it, over her neck; then drawing it tight, the poor Italian girl fell to the ground, struggling in strangulation; in another minute, and she was bound hand and foot; the cord was removed from her neck, and the three wretches left the apartment, carrying their victim between them.

Anne was so stupified by this sudden scene, that she stood transfixed, until the secure bolting of the door aroused her. What she had just seen, clearly proved to her the kind of wretches she was detained by. Her agony redoubled at the thought of the fate her newly-found friend would meet with from the hands of such monsters. The mere glance she had obtained of Spikely and of Nino, showed her that they were the same with whom she had so fiercely struggled on the Heath. Her only hope lay in instant flight; but how to accomplish it? If she could reach the gallery, might she not thus find an outlet still unbarred?—the trial must be made. The moment the idea entered her mind, she was at her labours. Every thing that she could pile the one upon the other, was brought and placed beneath the gallery. Her feeling now was almost as great for the safety of the Italian girl as for her own. The massive table was dragged to the proper spot: on this she placed the heavy stool, or chair; and then, with other smaller things, she built up a mount, from which she could reach the gallery. How

*cautiously did she attempt the ascent, yet how determined was every movement! She felt that life or death was in every step. She reached the summit—caught firmly hold of the failing; it suddenly gave way, and she fell backwards to the ground, stunned—insensible.

When the three worthies, Spikely, Brassinjaw, and Nino, had placed Mona, still bound, in a place they believed one of safety—namely, a closet near the lower room—they began to discuss their proposed modes of action. Their discovery, through Brassinjaw, that the Beauty of the Heath was really the daughter of Hewet, so closely their host's neighbour, disconcerted their plans greatly. Nino, too, found that he had miscalculated his lord's ideas of honour, and that from his first, as he had thought well-laid clever plan, nothing but further disgrace and punishment were likely to accrue, if carried into full effect, now was devising some scheme how he could *virtuously* turn his knowledge to account. Then, again, what were they to do with Mona? She had now declared her intention of leaving Nino; and after what had just occurred, should they set her at liberty, there was little knowing what course she might pursue. Brassinjaw observed—"I say nothing—mind, I say nothing! but were she my stumblingblock, I know how I should dispose of her." As he rose, he began unconcernedly to hum the air of "London Bridge is broken down;" then placing an old shattered chair on a particular spot, left the room.

"What does he mean by that?" enquired Nino.

"How should I know!" replied Spikely. "But this I do know, that never did the *sainily* Father Brassinjaw do aught without an end in view—in that old chair, depend upon it, there is a meaning."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, before the floor, whereon the chair stood, gave way—the chair was gone; and Nino, starting up, ran to the opening in the floor, but as quickly started back again, for all he saw beneath, was the raging waters dashing through the arch beneath the Bridge.

Nino, turning towards Spikely, cast on him an enquiring look, as asking a solution of this strange proceeding; but Spikely merely received it with a vacant stare, and taking from his pouch a sort of memorandum-book, began to read.

When Nino looked again towards the spot where the opening had so recently been, he found the floor had already resumed its original state. At the same moment one of the panels, close to him, slid aside, and there stood Brassinjaw, grinning, in evident delight, at having astonished the Italian.

"What means all this?" said Nino, as Brassinjaw closed the panel through which he had entered.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" replied the other, "a mere nothing! It is a simple way I have adopted for getting rid of any odd thing I have no further use for—that is all."

"Then, I suppose," said Nino, "as I wished to get rid of Mona, you would prescribe that cold bath. But, no, no! although I do wish her dead, I have no desire to have her blood upon my head. The poor devil, I believe, once loved me more than her own soul; for she would have hazarded that, had she believed it would have pleased me; and

perhaps she has, if what the canting priests tell us be true. She is safe enough where she is for the present; and, by and by, we can find a way to dispose of her. But I should like to see the mechanism of this man-trap, for such I suppose it was originally."

Brassinjaw, who was rather proud of the mechanical improvement he had made in this "plaything," as he called it, took Nino into the next apartment—opened the cupboard, and there pointed out the rope which he had now made to pass through a hole in the top of the closet, and which, when pulled violently, drew out the bolts, and the trap fell, as we have seen. But the part he was most vain of, was his own contrivance for raising the floor again, and fastening it as securely as before. Nino's praise put Brassinjaw in high spirits, and they once more returned to the other room. They began soon to discuss what to them was of vital importance—namely, how to dispose of Anne, whom, from Brassinjaw's discovery, they knew to be Hewet's daughter. Nino's scheme they now felt was much more likely to bring them a rope than a fortune; and both Spikely and Brassinjaw were not over nice in their expressions of anger against him for having led them into such a scrape. So violently did their altercations become at one moment, that the Italian drew his knife, and, flying towards the door, which he held in his hand, that he might secure a retreat, swore "that the first who stirred a foot towards him, should find it buried in his side."

"We are all fools," roared out Spikely, "worse than fools, to lose our time in quarreling, when every moment is of consequence. Sit down, Nino, sit down, and let us talk like men! What shall we do with the girl? that is the question."

Nino proposed that they should take her back towards the Heath, in a like state to that in which they had brought her, and there leave her to chance; but this plan Brassinjaw shewed at once was absurd; for he overheard enough to let him know that she was fully aware of the place of her imprisonment.

Brassinjaw had inwardly made up his own mind exactly what he should do, which was nothing short of betraying his two friends, and by the restoration of Hewet's daughter, gain all the honour and advantage to himself. But Brassinjaw knew his companions too well not to be very guarded in his movements; so he put on a more ferocious bearing than either of the others, and swore "he saw no better plan than the trap and water."

"No," said Spikely, "not for her; but there is one who shall taste it, and shall be made to know the treat she is to have before she has it, and that is Nan. I feared that we should never meet again; but we have; and I have dogged her to her hiding-place; if once I can lure her here, she and I will settle our long reckoning; when she's gone, then I can look to my other friends. Horton's my next, but he, the villain, shall be tortured, and soundly too, before I give him the *coup de grace*."

"But what are we to do with the girl?" exclaimed Nino, impatient at hearing Spikely talk of nothing else but his own concerns.

"Yes," said Brassinjaw, "what are we to do with the girl? she must not stop here."

Now, that she should stop where she was, was exactly what he

wished, but he knew his customers, as he thought, so said exactly contrary to what he really wished; but as one conjuror generally knows the tricks of another, so does one rogue understand the shifts and deceits of his compeer; therefore Spikely, hearing Brassinjaw so vehement upon the subject, first of the girl's destruction, and then on the importance of her removal, began to suspect the truth, so said—"Always right, always right, Brassinjaw—leave a priest alone for that. Yes, the girl must not stay here; but I know where she can stay, and safely, until we determine upon her fate, and that is in my old house, by the Black Arch of the Clink."

Brassinjaw felt that Spikely would, while speaking, fix his eyes upon him, so put on a look of the greatest innocence; and being quite a match for Spikely, or any one else, in the art of deceit, made a strong opposition to this arrangement, for he was sure then Spikely would carry out his plan. Brassinjaw, like a good general, was not to be taken by surprise, by any sudden movement of the enemy. No, no, the instant his opponent wheeled about, he too presented a new front. In an instant he had formed a combination in his own mind, that would lead to victory quite as surely as his first scheme; indeed it was only marching by a different road which led to the same end. It was now settled that at ten that night she should be taken to the Clink. Brassinjaw was appointed to mix a strong ofiate in her food, so that she might be carried off once more in a sleeping state.

They now broke up their consultation, and each went to his various affairs.

Spikely would willingly have thrown his friends over, had he seen a safe way of doing it, but was fain to be contented for the present with his self-promised revenge upon his wife and Horton.

Nino started off to make one more effort to gain the good opinion of his enraged master, but if he failed in that, he, like Brassinjaw, had fully determined, to get what he could for himself by turning virtuous, as he called it, and betraying his companions.

Ever since the attack of the thieves upon Alyce and her daughter, and from which danger Lerue had rescued them, the merchant had determined to bring his family once more to town, the moment he could find a suitable mansion; for be it known that William Hewet had risen so high in the estimation of his brother citizens, that ere long he would no doubt be called upon to fill the highest post of honour the city could bestow, that of Lord Mayor. He had already been one of the Common Council, was an Alderman, and indeed enjoyed every mark of distinction that a wealthy honest merchant could desire. Under these circumstances, and finding himself so frequently coming in contact with the highest in the land, who from admiration of his character for worth and probity, had in more than one instance allowed these frequent meetings upon business, to end in settled friendship, there were, indeed, few nobles of that day, notwithstanding the proud bearing to others they ever maintained, who looked upon it as any degradation to rank Master William Hewet amongst their friends; but it must also be remembered that at this time many of the nobles were themselves merchants; we say, therefore, that under all these circumstances, it became absolutely

necessary that his style of living now should take a more exalted position in the eyes of the world, so he bought a magnificent mansion in Philpot Lane, so called from the name of the owner, Sir John Philpot, who dwelt there.

After the trial at Westminster, the whole of Hewet's party adjourned to this new mansion. It was not yet in a state for him to take up his permanent abode there, but for a day or two it was determined that Alyce, and indeed all the inmates of the Cottage on the Heath, should abide there. Had it not been for the dreadful gloom which the loss of Anne had necessarily cast upon the feelings of all, how happily would have been that party, at the triumphant termination of Eoline and her husband's troubles. As may be supposed, every care that kindness of heart could imagine, was bestowed upon the Abbess, whose determination was, should she recover from the shock her whole frame had received from fear and suffering in the storm, to retire to some convent, in a foreign land, and end her days in prayer and penitence.

The Cripple, notwithstanding the natural joy he felt at the strange change which had taken place in his fortunes, would listen to no word but such as touched upon the loss of Anne; indeed, until some tidings of her should be received, all appeared determined not to allow one moment to be passed in selfish happiness.

When Edward returned from the earl's mansion, all, but Flora and the Bridge-shooter were astounded at the news, that Lerue was indeed the Lord Talbot. Edward enlightened his friends, as far as he felt authorised to do, as to the cause of the young lord appearing upon the Heath, in the humble guise of a poor artist.

"How strange," said Alyce, "that one so exalted, should have felt any interest in the company of us, plain, simple folk; I am sure his attentions to our poor lost child, were as kind as though she had been his sister."

And a little kinder too, thought Flora, as she gave a peculiar glance towards the Bridge-shooter.

"A great deal kinder," sighed Edward, to himself; and in his thoughts, he said, "a great deal kinder than mine were when I was her brother; and I must never now show how kind I could be, since I know that mine are no longer a brother's feelings."

The merchant and Alyce scarcely knew how to keep their expressions of gratitude within bounds, when Edward informed them, that Lord Talbot had promised not to leave a stone unturned, in his endeavour to serve them.

Poor Edward, much as he prayed for the discovery of Anne, still more fervently prayed that it might be some other than the young lord, who should be blessed by making that discovery. Had there been wanting on his own part any stimulant to exertion, he could not have found a stronger, than in the feelings of rivalry that entered his breast, with regard to a determination not to allow another to rob him of the prize he coveted—a simple prize, but to him inestimable—the grateful smile of Anne, which she was sure to bestow upon her preserver. New schemes were laid down and discussed. As in all such cases, one thought one thing, one another; but upon this point they were all

agreed, that Anne had been stolen away, most likely for the purpose of gaining a high reward for her restoration. This idea turned all their thoughts upon the best method of announcing such reward, and, at all events, the reward being offered, would give great publicity to the fact of her being missing, and might thus lead to some good end.

They were very busily drawing up an account of the abduction, for such they called it, the idea of her death having been completely given up, when a stranger was announced, as awaiting an interview with the merchant, upon business of the greatest importance. The merchant was too much accustomed to have messengers calling upon him at all hours, on business of the greatest importance, for him to feel the least surprise; so, taking up a lamp, for it was already dark, he, with Edward, descended the grand old staircase of massive carved oak, down to the marble-paved hall. Here Edward left his master, as he had affairs to transact that night in his own apartment on the Bridge.

Ever since his interview with the young lord, the reader may easily imagine that little else was floating in his mind but what was connected in some way with what that lord had said. Never did he remember to have entered the Golden Fleece with a heart so thoroughly depressed as he did upon this night; a kind of listless despair had taken complete possession of his mind, for he felt that even were Anne restored, she was now more hopelessly lost to him than ever.

"Ah!" he said, "the merchant need no longer be apprehensive of his daughter being married to a man who loves her not, and who will wed her but for her father's known wealth; if such as the heir to an earldom, and a rich one too, offer her his hand, it can be but for the worth of that hand alone: happy father, happy bride, where both are so convinced that love has brought the hand that's offered! But does he love her more than I do?—impossible—but I have nought but love to offer, and even had we plighted our troth, I should always have been suspected of wedding her wealth more than herself. I would rather tear out my heart," he exclaimed, "than live under such an unworthy imputation! It is perhaps better as it is; for she being rich, and I almost poor, the sincerity of my affection never could have been put to the proof."

The whole of that evening, as he sat working at his account books, would such reflections as these mix themselves up with the more worldly affairs that lay before him; the clock had already struck nine, when shutting his books, he rested his head upon his hand, and covering his eyes, became lost in a sort of dreamy melancholy abstraction; there he sat, immovable as if entranced.

When the merchant entered the large unfurnished waiting-room, in which the stranger was, he saw a man closely muffled in a cloak, and altogether of such a suspicious looking character, that Hewet for a moment paused, as if doubtful whether to close the door behind him or not.

"Be not alarmed," said the stranger, "I am a friend."

The merchant at once recognised a voice that was familiar to him, but who the speaker was he had still to learn.

"I am not often alarmed," replied the merchant smiling, "but I must

own your mysterious appearance for the moment did surprise me—what would you with me?"

To which the other replied—"You have lost your daughter!"

"If it be on her account you come, then indeed you are a friend—speak quickly!"

"Slow and sure," observed the other; "and before I can let you into too much of what you will wish to know, I have a question or two to be answered; and it will depend on the answers I shall receive, whether I throw off my cloak, or depart again unknown. You have lost your daughter; but that I know; and you would doubtless give a good reward to any one who should put you in the way of finding her?"

"He should be rewarded, to his heart's content," replied the merchant, beginning to tremble with anxious hope.

"You are a merchant, therefore a man of business," said the stranger, "so I will attempt to speak in a business-like manner; would you give five hundred pounds of right lawful money?"

"A thousand!" said the merchant, in a tone of supplicating anxiety.

"Now, to show you," replied the other, "how much I will do for love to serve you, I will not take advantage of that offer, but fix the reward at a good five hundred pounds; for the payment I must have your bond; and for the next security I must have your oath: before I speak further you must swear, that come of this meeting what may, you will never drag me forward to give evidence against any one who may have been implicated in the affair. I hazard my life in doing what I do, unless you swear to keep my secret."

"The most solemn vow that the heart can conceive I freely take," replied the merchant: "now, who and what are you—and what is the hope you bring?"

"'Tis not hope I bring," said the stranger, "but certainty—my name is Brassinjaw." Saying this he disclosed himself to the eyes of the astonished merchant.

"Brassinjaw!" he exclaimed, "what, in Heaven's name, can you know of my lost child?"

"Every thing," was the other's reply; "but the share I have taken in this transaction has been done, as you may be sure, more out of pity for, and hope to shelter innocence, than any desire to gain reward; although I'm no father, I know a father's sufferings; but I will not give way to feeling," and the old rascal pretended to wipe away a tear. "There is one more point upon which you must solemnly pledge me your word, and that is to be guided entirely by me; for if but a grain of suspicion were to find its way into the brain of those, who like myself hold the secret, not only my life, but that of your child would be the immediate sacrifice."

"Only restore my lost child to these arms, and be not afraid either of reward or caution."

Of all the surprises the merchant had lately received, few were greater than that caused by hearing that Anne, for whom they had been hunting far and wide, was the inmate of the Cardinal's Hat, the next door to his own abode.

"Oh, let me fly to her rescue!" exclaimed Hewet, forgetting all his promises of caution; and as he said this he made a movement towards

the door, but was held back by Brassinjaw, who began to tremble for his own safety.

"Are you mad?" he said. "would you destroy me, and her, and with me all hope of saving her? Be calm, and listen; follow but my instructions, and this very night shall see Anne Hewet beneath her father's roof."

The merchant, endeavouring to calm his feelings, made many enquiries about the cause of her being taken to the place she was in.

"Those," replied Brassinjaw, "who brought her there knew not who she was; they thought her name was Allen, and that she was some insignificant trader's girl; it was I who discovered the truth; when all my old love and friendship for you and yours returned to my breast, and I vowed inwardly to save her or sacrifice my life. Ah, old friendships, Master Hewet, are sweet ties; but I'll not give way to feeling," and again the old rascal passed his hand over his eyes.

The merchant was too engrossed by his own hopes, his fears, his anxieties of every conflicting kind, to attend much to what fell from the lips of Brassinjaw, excepting when upon the subject nearest to his heart.

Hewet now enquired what was the plan to be pursued.

"A very simple one," replied Brassinjaw. "The rats will walk quietly into the trap I have set, depend upon it, unless we scare them by being too anxious to secure them: many a rat has escaped through the catcher's hurry. My plan is this—you see, so alarmed are those who have her in their power, at finding whom she is, that they scarcely know how to move; so it has been determined, that, for a time she shall be kept securely in an old house in the Clink."

How the mention of that vile place called up to the memory of the merchant, the danger his child had once before suffered on that spot!

"Now, at ten this night," continued Brassinjaw, "when all upon the Bridge will be dark and quiet, it is settled that she shall be removed; but whether by the Bridge-road, or in a boat, I am uncertain, so we must be prepared for both emergencies. You must place yourself, with some dozen stout men of authority around the Southwark gate, but not in a way to cause suspicion. Keep all as quiet and out of sight as possible. At that hour the tide will be at its safest, so let the Bridge-shooter, and Willy-of-the-bridge, be near the arch beneath my house; let them have plenty of aid within call, for those they will have to deal with are none of the meekest, and use their knives as freely upon the flesh of man, as a humble sinner like myself would upon that of a bull. Come which way they will, you will easily know them, for at that hour there will be but few others moving about, and between them they will carry something wrapped round in a sail-cloth; the moment you are sure 'tis they, fly upon them in a body, for singly, or in pairs you are a match for neither of them; bind them hand and foot—knock out their brains if you like, but as you value the safety of my throat let them not escape; if either should do so, you need not fear that I shall ever come to trouble you for my reward, or pay you another visit, unless it be at the dead of night, by your bedside as a ghost with a bleeding throat, to upbraid you for my untimely death. When the guilty ones are secured, remember that I am not to be named; but I will take care

that plenty of other crimes shall be proved against them, that shall stop up every loop-hole of escape ; if they live, some of us will die, depend on that."

"But you have not told me how we are to find my child."

"Why, in the sail-cloth ; did I not say so before ?"

"Good Heavens, she will be dead !" exclaimed the merchant.

"Fear not that—she's used to it : but be not alarmed because she seems to lie in death, for to prevent a chance of her screaming she will be put to sleep, sounder than ever but once she slept before ; only keep your faith with me, act to the letter as I have directed, and all will be well for you and yours, however it may turn out for me, or my companions. Now then I must away, or all may yet go wrong."

Saying this he again muffled himself in his long cloak, pulled his hat closely over his face, and then stealthily, and with as little noise as possible, quitted the merchant's new dwelling.

"Yes," said he to himself, as he hurried towards the Bridge, "they would dupe and fool a priest, would they ? but father Brassinjaw was never yet cajoled by man, no, nor woman, and that's something for a man to say, and he's not to begin the trade of fool as late in the day as it is with him. I begin to fear them, so the sooner they are comfortably settled the sooner my own comfort will be secured."

The merchant for a time felt so oppressed with hope and fear, that he could scarcely believe the visit Brassinjaw had just paid him was more than the flighty wandering of the mind—a waking dream. So doubtful did he feel upon the question, that before he related what had happened, he called his servitor, and enquired of him if any one had really been there.

The man stared at his master, and well he might ; for he had to remind him that the strange man had scarcely left the place five minutes.

"No, no," he said, when he had sent the man to summon the Bridge-shooter and the Cripple ; "it must be real—it is no dream ; but oh, Heavens, if it be true ! then I shall once more see my darling child and that too, perhaps, within this hour, for time flies apace."

When the Cripple and the Bridge-shooter heard the strange tale, they were scarcely less surprised than the merchant had been ; but instead of losing a moment in doubting whether it could be a fact or not, they, more wisely, felt that even such a chance should not be slightly let go by. It was thought advisable not to tell Alyce of their hopes in case of failure, nor even to make Flora privy to their attempt ; the only debatable point was, whether they should apprise Osborne ; but, upon reflection, it was thought advisable not even to let him know aught about it.

The merchant was soon on his road to obtain the proper assistance, as were the Bridge-shooter and the Cripple in their locality. The night proved clear, but very windy, the wind blowing strongly from the south. As Brassinjaw had said, "the tide was at the safest ;" so William placed a boat, well manned, within the shadow of each of four of the arches near to that beneath the Cardinal's Hat, but not those exactly the next to it ; he had provided himself with a loud whistle, with which he was to call them suddenly to the one spot. They were all upon the watch soon after nine ; never did father await so anxiously the coming

of his child as did the poor merchant upon that bleak night : every moment the wind became stronger, but still it continued to blow from the south.

Here we will leave them for a time, and again visit Edward in his solitude.—He was just about retiring to rest, when he fancied he saw a flash of lightning against his bed-room window—soon after he saw another—and then a distant humming sound reached his ear—and the lightning became more frequent, and lasted longer ; at that time of year, and in such a night, it could not be lightning ; so to clear up the point, he opened his casement, and looking out, saw a great flaring of light just beyond the Bridge in Southwark ; the light increasing rapidly, soon proved to him, that there must be at least some half dozen houses on fire. People were now hurrying across the Bridge from the City side towards the scene of conflagration, and a general cry of “fire” began to resound from every quarter. As quickly as he could, he resumed his attire, and hoping to do some little good, he hastened from his master’s house and joined the excited throng.

The wind, as we have said, blew strongly from the south, and on its wings brought burning flakes of fire far upon the Bridge, many persons there were already injured by them. It must be remembered that the merchant’s house lay on the City end, so that Edward had to traverse nearly the whole length of the Bridge before he reached the Southwark Gate ; here he found the crowd beginning to retreat, for it appeared, that the houses at that end were entirely enveloped in flames, and there was, that way, neither ingress nor egress possible. Knowing the combustible nature of the greater portion of the houses on the Bridge, Edward’s first anxiety, fearing the worst, was to hurry back to his master’s house, to collect all their valuable account books, and remove them to some place of safety. Although he believed it to be his duty to make all sure, as far as lay in his power, he did not much fear the fire reaching their dwelling, because he calculated that at the first opening on the Bridge, even if it came so far, there it would meet with a certain check. He gave a lad, whom he met hurrying towards the Southwark end, some money to return to the City and apprise the merchant of the danger on the Bridge. Edward little imagined, that at that moment his master was in the very midst of the fire in Southwark, and in agony at being thus shut off from reaching the dwelling wherein he knew his child was lying. Just as Edward was entering the Golden Pleece, he heard the people say, that the flames had passed the first opening, and that they feared the whole Bridge would be destroyed. Not a moment was now to be lost ; he hurried from room to room, collecting every paper that he thought could be of value to his master ; just as he was about to carry his load away, notwithstanding the increasing danger, he could not resist the temptation of rushing up to his own room, and secure his writing-case, for in that were all the letters Anne had ever written to him ; this delay, trifling as it really was, had nearly cost him his life, for by the time he again descended, the roadway of the Bridge opposite his door, had been so choked up with goods and chattels, that he found it impossible to pass out. It now struck him that the

safer way of all would be by the roofs of the houses; and to make the attempt, he once more ascended to his room.

The noise below was now becoming deafening, and one universal shriek of horror filled his ears; he hastened to the roof, when the cause of the new alarm met his eyes—the wind which, at the beginning, when the fire was in its infancy, brought alarming flakes of burning wood across the bridge, as the body of flame increased, so increased this shower of burning embers; they had lodged upon, and ignited the northern end of the Bridge, which now was burning almost as fiercely as the Southwark end. The shrieks and cries of the crowd on the Bridge were maddening, for the multitude that had rushed on from the city end, and had completely filled the Bridge, were, as it might be said, caught in a trap of fire. Hundreds of boats were now approaching from every part of the river; every aid that could be leant, towards saving the poor wretches that were hemmed in between two devouring fires, was rendered; people from every window were seen, some calling for aid, others lowering themselves by ropes into the vessels beneath, while many, in despair, were casting themselves headlong into the river, flying from a death of fire into a watery grave.

Edward, looking around, stood petrified at the awfulness of the dreadful scene; he saw no one but himself upon the roofs, for who, in such a place as the Bridge, could expect to find safety there? But had the City end not have already caught, the escape that way was not so wild in its conception. He now gave himself up for lost, certain death appeared close before his eyes; there was one point from which he could scarcely withdraw his eyes—that was the Bridge-gate tower, the ghastly heads were lighted up by the surrounding flames, with a supernatural glare—the red glow upon the cheeks, gave the dead features a living light; they shook in the wind, as though they laughed at the destruction of those who had once looked with smiles upon their agonizing doom. What could he do?—was he to stand there immoveable until the shrivelling flames surrounded him with their fiery arms, nor give up their embrace until he had crumbled into dust? At this moment of despair, a new hope flashed across his mind like a ray of inspiration.—“Yes, yes!” he exclaimed, almost overcome to tears, with the sudden hope, “I know, I know the way! if I can gain the sterlings by the outlet beneath the Cardinal’s Hat, I may yet be saved.” He flew to the roof door, but it was securely fastened—his eye fell upon a skylight—another moment, and it was dashed in by his own weight, he fell heavily upon the railing of a gallery, he caught it as he fell, the bars gave way, and he found himself precipitated into the room beneath; in this there was a lamp burning, but looking round, he had nearly dropped to the earth in horror and surprise, for on a couch he beheld the senseless body of the merchant’s child. He stood motionless for a moment, his eyes fixed upon the spectre, as he believed it to be; but so true to nature was its every lineament, that he could not resist the impulse of approaching it, and laying his hand upon its heart.

“Heavens!” he exclaimed, “’tis no vision; blood and bone are here, and pulsation beats within this heart—she sleeps! Awake, awake! if indeed, my senses mock me not, and thou be Anne’s sweet self, awake!”

He raised her on his arm, she sighed, but woke not. The shrieks and

roaring of the flames, called him again to a full sense of his dreadful position, now doubly dreadful, if indeed the being he held was not a mere mockery of a distempered brain. He took her in his arms, the door had been slightly fastened, but his strength soon shattered it before him. He had descended but a short way, when his further progress was stayed by the flames having burst through from his own dwelling, and were rapidly devouring the stairs by which he had hoped to escape. He flew into a room, the door of which was open; this room looked out upon the bridge; he dashed the window out, and observing a beam some distance below, reaching across to the opposite side, which was not yet in flames, he with great difficulty, at last succeeded in reaching it safely with his precious charge; the footing was so insecure, that, laden as he was, he must have fallen, but for the friendly aid of a single line that had been stretched across to hang streamers from upon some late festive occasion; even then the attempt was one of peril, for did he once swerve from his balance, the line would have snapped like a thread, and then both must have met with death.

When once he had gained the opposite dwelling, he lost not a moment, but hastened down; here all was despair; but his one hope still remained, the outlet by the sterling. He passed as quickly as he could through the heaps of boxes, bales, and other things that lay about; entered the now-deserted Cardinal's Hat, he reached the lower room, when, to his surprise, he heard a groan, and then a cry for help; for a moment he deposited his dearest treasure on a settle that stood by, and went to the spot whence the cry had issued, when opening a door, he there found a female bound hand and foot—it was the Italian girl; in another moment she was free, and quickly comprehending their danger, she allowed not surprise to check her power to act. The trap in the floor was soon raised, and, oh joy beyond hope realized, the very boat beneath was that of the Bridge-shooter and the Cripple. The sleeping Anne, and then Mona, was lowered into the boat, Edward hanging, for an instant, by his hands on the edge of the opening, dropped into the bark, and all were safe.

As they rowed towards the shore, they looked back aghast at the fearful devastation going on upon the Bridge; at many parts the buildings were so undermined by the fire, that no boats dare go near to rescue those who, seeing no other chance of escape, flung themselves into the stream. More than one dwelling, almost entire, fell over into the flood, and bore down to destruction all that were beneath. If aught could at that moment of thankfulness have given a deeper joy to Edward's heart, it was, that, just after they had reached a spot beyond the danger from the burning timbers that were falling from the Bridge, they run foul of the merchant's barge.

Hewet, when all hope had ceased of gaining admittance to the Bridge by the Southwark side, and hearing of the disastrous conflagration having gained possession of the opposite end of the Bridge, saw no possible chance of rescuing his child, but by the way of the sterling beneath Brassinjaw's abode; he was now on his way thither, either to save her or die with her in the flames, when, as if by Providence directed, he came



The Fire on the Bridge

suddenly upon the boat in which she was being conveyed, as it were, from death to life.

"She's saved, she's saved!" exclaimed Edward, starting up in the boat.

"And she'll be lost again as soon as found," roared out the Bridge-shooter, "if you let your mad joy upset the boat." Then addressing the merchant, who seemed upon the point of springing forward into their bark — "Sit quiet, master; we have her safe, and that knowledge is quite happiness enough for the next ten minutes, I'm sure." Saying this he pulled Edward back to his seat, and giving a peculiar whistle to the boatmen, which they seemed perfectly to understand, they plied their oars with double vigour, and started forward some boats' length in advance of the merchant's barge.

Hewet, scarcely daring to believe his senses, felt, that, in the crowded state the river then was, let it be a dream or not, that the Bridge-shooter's commands were not to be slighted, so sat as quietly as his intensely-wrought feelings would permit, until they were all safely landed at the Old Swan Stairs.

It would be impossible to express in words all the varied feelings which filled the breasts of the inmates of the merchant's mansion on that eventful night; we shall therefore pass over the scene in silence.

When the fire on the Bridge had been subdued, and the ruins could be examined, the destruction was found to be awful with regard to human life; it is said that not less than ~~three~~ ^{three} thousand persons perished either in the flames, or by drowning; hundreds who were closed in upon the Bridge, by the fire having been carried on the winds from the Southwark to the City end, and thus forming two devouring furnaces both raging at the same time, were literally roasted to death, as in a burning cage. It was almost miraculous, considering the locality, and the materials of which the greater portion of the houses were constructed, that a single dwelling should have escaped; but many did entirely, and more that were but partially burned; of the latter number, was the celebrated Cardinal's Hat. It is true that all the upper portion was consumed, but that part which remained, our amiable friend, Brassinjay, soon turned to good account. A very few days sufficed to render the Bridge again passable for foot passengers, and as such a work could not be achieved without a vast number of workmen, mine host managed to carry on a roaring trade, not only amongst these labourers, but with a better class of customers, namely, the inquisitive who came in throngs to visit this extraordinary scene of devastation. The hair-breadth escapes that he recounted as having fallen to his own share, were beyond belief, but were still listened to with infinite delight. He hit upon one bright idea to bring grist to his mill, and that was, in drawing attention to the circumstance, that whilst nearly every thing was consumed around it, the sign of the holy Cardinal's Hat remained uninjured. A few years before, and he would have boldly announced it as a miracle; but times having somewhat changed, he merely *hinted* at such a thing, and these hints had their weight with many who always will see supernatural aid, where they should only look for simple cause and effect. The fact was the sign-board had fallen down just after Osborne had passed across the beam, and had been lying, snugly protected, beneath some iron goods that were

heaped upon it, until Brassinjaw found it uninjured the next day, and had then, with his own hands replaced it in its former conspicuous station, not dreaming of turning such a trifle to account, until some one pointed out to him "how *miraculous* it was, that in such a position, the Cardinal's Hat alone should remain unscathed."

Brassinjaw caught at the idea, and soon managed to turn it to good account. There was one circumstance puzzled him a good deal, and that was why he had not seen either Spikely or Nino; his great hope was that they had perished in the flames. That Anne had been rescued he was most agreeably assured of, by receiving his promised reward, which having obtained, he did not trouble himself greatly to enquire how.

The true cause of Spikely and Nino having become invisible to their friend, lay in the fact of their having been fully convinced of Brassinjaw's betrayal of them. Cautiously as he had managed his interview with the merchant, his movements had not escaped the watchful eye of Spikely.

It appeared that Spikely, suspecting the others' intention, lay in wait for him, and dogged his steps to the very place he imagined he would go to, namely, to the merchant's mansion; the moment he had entered the door, Spikely hurried away to find Nino, and acquaint him with the discovery he had made with regard to Brassinjaw's treachery. Fearing that they would be denounced, they fled at once from London, and remained some time concealed, forming plans of vengeance against their betrayer, and also some other plans which will be revealed in due time.

The Bridge being the only passage for horses and waggons, that then connected the City of London with the southern side of the river, it was of too much importance to remain long in a ruinous state, so that every exertion was made to render the roadway passable, and to fit up temporary sheds where the shops had been totally destroyed.

The merchant's dwelling was entirely consumed, and here rose up one of those slightly constructed edifices; those portions that lay in the stone-work of the Bridge were soon re-wainscoted, and rendered inhabitable; above these came the new shop with one room behind it; and this, for some time after the fire, constituted the only place of business of the great merchant, Master Hewet of the Bridge.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

I neither may nor can
 Longer the pleasure of mine hearte hide;
 If that thou vouchesafe, what so betide,
 Thy daughter will I take, ere that I wend,
 As for my wife unto her liues end.

CHAUCER.

EDWARD OSBORNE'S anxiety on account of the state of stupor in which Anne continued all the next day after the fire, was so great, that upon every occasion he could steal away from his superintendence of the searching the ruins of the Golden Fleece, he had hastened away to his

master's new mansion ; at his third visit, he learnt that returning consciousness had begun to appear ; this made his heart beat with delight ; but a great damp was at the same time cast over his mind, by hearing that the merchant had the moment before left the house for the purpose of paying his dutiful respects to Lord Talbot, to apprise that young nobleman of the happy discovery and restoration of his lost child, and to thank his lordship for the great interest he had shown upon the occasion of Anne's abduction.

All the joy poor Osborné had experienced at having been, as he felt, the heaven-directed instrument of salvation of his heart's adored, vanished upon hearing where his master had gone. All the young nobleman had told him, again presented itself to his memory, and he now felt little doubt, that Lord Talbot would at once disclose his intentions to the father. So anxious was he that his own secret should not be guessed at, that he determined at once to acquaint the merchant with his intention to leave England for ever ; for as he said to himself—" If I express my wishes *before* I am supposed to know of the great honour intended to his family, Master Hewet will not set down my sudden determination to any disappointed hopes on my part."

When the merchant did return, he was in high glee ; and upon hearing of the rapid progress his child had made towards recovery, during his absence, he exclaimed—" This I shall now for ever regard as the most fortunate day of my life, excepting one, my Alyce dear, and that one was the day on which you consented to be mine !" Upon saying this, he most unceremoniously gave his spouse a hearty kiss of real affection. —" Why, what are you staring at, boy ?" continued Hewet, addressing Edward. " You need not blush at seeing an honest husband kiss an honest wife ! And may Heaven grant you the same blessing, of being able to say, after you have been wedded as many years as we have, that the day your loved one, for I suppose you will have a loved one, one of these days, told you she was yours, can still be regarded as the most fortunate day of your life !"

That the merchant should be thus happy did not appear unnatural, considering it was the first day after the finding his child. But Osborné, who delighted in tormenting himself, as all do who really love, felt that there was another cause, and a strong one too, for the merchant's excessive joy, and that was, the proposal, which he doubted not, had already been made to Master Hewet, by the heir of Shrewsbury.

When Anne recovered her senses, the first person who met her dreaming gaze, was the Italian girl, Mona, watching by her couch, as she had seen her watching once before. All that had passed between them, came vividly to her recollection ; but looking round, she discovered such splendid luxury on every side, that, for the moment, she fancied she must be wandering in the mysterious realms of sleep. It was some time before Mona could convince her, that all she gazed at was no vision, but reality ; but when she learnt that she was once again beneath a father's roof, her senses had nearly flown, so powerful was the revulsion of feeling that had seized upon her heart. —" Oh, no, no !" she exclaimed, " it cannot be—it cannot be ! such happiness is not to bless the wretched. Anne ! 'tis all illusion—all illusion !"

Mona endeavoured, by every means, to explain, but the sufferer's mind was too bewildered by the power of the drugs, and by her new-born hopes and fears, to comprehend easily what the Italian girl was saying; but having become somewhat calmer, Mona summoned the merchant and Alyce into the room.

It was now no longer possible to doubt her senses, she felt her arms were really around the necks of her doting parents—that their tears of joy, now mingling with her own, were the true outpourings of a beating heart. When Anne beheld Edward enter, an involuntary blush suffused her lovely face, and her eyes, unbidden, turned imploringly towards Mona, as if to say, “you alone know my secret—do not betray me.”

Had there required one more rivet, to fasten immovably love's chain around the captive heart of Osborne, that rivet was soon applied, and proved to be one that could never again be loosened; for when all the dangers, from which she had so miraculously escaped, were related to the now happy girl, and when she learnt that her life had a second time been saved by him, to whom she had in secret given up her whole heart, she cast upon him one look of such intense gratitude, that, with the rapidity of thought, it flew through his own eyes into his heart, and there took root for ever. How such a look would have blessed any other man! but, alas! to Osborne, it seemed a doom.

From that instant, he felt that he could have endured the agony of perishing in the flames, with less of anguish, than he now knew he must endure at parting from her for ever; but every new accession of affection that seized upon his heart, and seemed to bind him closer and closer to her, determined him to fly more quickly than ever from the maddening spell.

That very night, after all the other inmates of the place had retired to rest, he prayed of the merchant to grant him a few minutes of private converse.

So unusual a circumstance caused the merchant unfeigned surprise. —“And what,” said he, smiling, “is the mighty matter we have in hand, boy, that should keep us from our couches at so late an hour as this? To-morrow, to-morrow, I'll be sworn, will be time enough, and there is a time for every thing, you know.”

“And that this is the time for what I have to say,” replied Osborne, “I feel convinced; for what I wish to say, cannot be said too soon.”

Edward had put on such a serious look, that the merchant felt himself constrained to feel serious too; so, without speaking, he resumed his seat, and pointing to another for Edward, awaited patiently any communication Osborne might wish to make.

It was not until after some hesitation, and turning deadly pale, that Edward thus began—“That you have always treated—nay, loved me, as a son, and that I have ever honoured and loved you as a father, needs but little effort, on either of our parts, to make apparent. Do not think that I have forgotten all the past kindness that has, since boyhood, been lavished upon me by all beneath your roof. Do not think me ungrateful for what I am going to say; it arises from no selfish feeling—it springs from no wayward love of change; but—but—master, I intend to leave

you." As he said this, he felt his whole heart rise into his very throat.

"Leave me!" exclaimed Hewet, leaning forward, and looking Edward full in the face.

The youth's eyes filled to the brim; and taking his master's hand, he sank his head upon it, as he repeated, firmly as his agitation would permit—"Yes, I intend to leave you."

"Did I not know your character too well, to doubt whatever you may say," replied the merchant, "I should receive such words with doubt indeed; but as I am sure you would not thus pain yourself, nor thus wound me, but for some potent reason, or one you believe to be such, I will listen to all you wish to say; but upon such a theme, I shall find it difficult not to doubt my senses. Tell me first, what has given birth to this sudden thought?"

"With me," replied Edward, "it is no sudden thought, but one that has never quitted me, in night or day, since first it took possession of my mind, and that is now some time gone by."

"Few men," said the merchant, "ever do any thing without a motive; and I am sure that, of all men, young as he is, Edward Osborne is the last to wish to take such a step as that he now proposes, without some strong incentive—some almost resistless motive. You have called me father: speak openly as a son: tell me all, and I will then advise you truly as a father."

"Alas!" replied Edward, "it is because I cannot speak openly, that I have so long delayed to acquaint you with my fixed resolve. Master, do not press me upon the question of my reason for wishing to quit your roof; but, believe me, I have the best of reasons."

"I never knew a youth yet," retorted the merchant, rather sharply, "that did not believe himself made up of reason. I hope, Edward, this is no boy's whim—no childish fancy. If your *reason*, as you call it, be one of common sense, why blush to own it?"

"It is no whim—no childish fancy," said Edward; "but the reason for my leaving this land will die with me. By what I have just said, you will perceive it is my wish to quit England, and it is in your power to let me do so, with honour to myself, and bright prospects, as regards my future fortune lying before me. The management of the English factory at Antwerp, is the post I have the ambition to aspire to; your name and influence will be sufficient to secure it for whom you will. Will you exert that influence for your apprentice, Edward Osborne, and thus, by opening a door, through which he may escape for ever from this isle, render him as happy, as he can ever be, while he exists upon this earth?"

"This is a subject, from first to last," replied the merchant, "requiring more than a mere thought ere it be determined. Many of your words have given birth to new thoughts within my breast; but this far, I will assure you at once—the idea of Antwerp is one that I will never oppose; there is a sound judgment shown in it, and if it be carried out, may one day lead to city fame, and, what is quite as good, city fortune. I will think upon what you have said, and in the morning we will again speak more fully upon all its varied bearings. Self, self, self," continued Hewet, "yes, self will peep out, do what we will to shut it in. I con-

fess, that when you first broached this business, Edward, I felt as if your abandoning me, would be half my ruin; thus, self peeped out on the black side of the affair, and there it kept on peeping, until you named Antwerp, when instantly round turned self in the opposite direction, and saw all sunshine. I like the notion more and more, the deeper I fathom it; you will have gained a station in the mercantile world, and I a help to my fortune, beyond what you can at present guess. But come, boy, since it is determined that we part, out with the reason of this step."

"It is a reason you must never know!" replied Osborne, evidently mortified at the now unconcerned manner in which the merchant alluded to their separation. "When I am gone, few, I imagine, will care much either for me or for my reasons."

"Indeed, but they will; all in this house will ever care for what concerns their well-loved friend, Master Osborne; and although the sea will roll between us, I have ships enough to afford you a passage now and then, to pay a visit to your former home."

"When once gone," said Edward, "I never more return—never!"

"Oh, yes, boy!" replied the merchant, "yes, yes, you will; upon one occasion, come you shall, even if I myself should have to fetch you, and that is when Anne shall marry, and that may happen sooner than I had thought, notwithstanding my particular ideas upon the subject. When I visited Lord Talbot to-day—But I see you are tired, and want to go to rest; so good night, and in the morning, as I said before, we will speak more fully upon these matters."

"And such is the world," said Edward, when the merchant had retired, "such is the world. Here have I been, for days and days, fearing, dreading, the pain I might give to him I have ever regarded as a father, and now he knows my resolve, so far from feeling sorrow at our separation, he rather evinces a satisfaction, bordering on delight; but it cannot surely be his mere selfish love of gain, which, seeing in the distance, blinds him to what he otherwise had viewed with pain? No, that cannot be; but, alas! I fear I guess too well the true cause of his satisfaction—his interview to-day with this young Lord Talbot; there the true cause lies. Well, be it so; if it but bring to Anne a happy heart, if I love her, as I know I do, I should rejoice, rather than weep. How unfortunate it is that I am compelled to be beneath the same roof with her. Had she been at the Cottage, I might have quitted England, without again looking upon her. I will be up by times—pray of the merchant not to betray my wishes to any one, until all is settled for my departure. I will point out to him how much better it were for Anne, in her enfeebled state, to be in the fresh air of the Heath, than pent up in this close unwholesome lane. If she be once away, I can hurry on my own departure with a freer mind; but were she gone, then should I have already looked upon her for the last time in this life. That thought seems like the parent of despair; I could not bear to leave her, without one last adieu! But can I bear to say to her farewell? No, no! It were better that we meet no more!"

Osborne spent half the night in devising means of avoiding Anne on

the morrow, and for persuading his master to send her at once to the Cottage of the Heath.

The next morning the whole house was astir betimes, for the Cripple and his adored wife were that day to commence a long journey with Gripclose, to take possession of one of Eoline's estates.

Notwithstanding the bustle in which the merchant was, Edward found an opportunity to express his wish, that no notice might be taken, at present, of their last night's conversation. The merchant too thought, that, until further progress had been made in the Antwerp business, strict silence upon the subject would be advisable; but he promised Edward that not one unnecessary moment should be wasted in bringing about the end desired. So far, Osborne's mind was relieved, but still more so, when the merchant, just as the other was about to speak to the same point, told him, he had determined that Anne should at once depart for the Cottage.

With the exception of Edward, who could not cast off his own sadness, all at the early morning meal wore smiling faces. Anne was the only one absent from the board; but upon this Osborne had calculated, or he would have found some excuse for being himself away.

Before they had sat down, the man of law, Master Gripclose, arrived, and was in high glee, to think how completely they had triumphed over that vile pretender, as he called him, Horton, whom he reported to have absconded, and that now there were strange and horrible tales flying about concerning him, and that it was even affirmed, the officers of justice had received information from some secret source, that, if true, would bring him and the halter into close acquaintanceship—"But for the truth of all this he did not vouch; but such," he said, "was the report afloat."

Edward and the Bridge-shooter now related the strange circumstances of the dagger being left with them so mysteriously, and that there was no doubting but that that dagger, or knife, had once belonged to Horton.

"Where is it?" said the man of law; "such a blade as that, stained, you say, with blood?"

"No!"

"Well, stained with something; but which, coming in connection with other evidence, might be regarded as blood."

"It will never come in connection with anything but the bottom of the Thames," said Edward, "for it was in the very room that first fell into the river, one mass of flames."

"We had much better talk of our own happy affairs," said the merchant, "than waste our breath upon so vile a subject as Harry Horton; but that is not his name now, nor does it matter whatever his name may be. You ordered the light barge, William?" he enquired of the Bridge-shooter, "and the horses too?"

"All will be ready, Master," replied William, "by the hour you named."

"Well then," said the merchant, "as we shall not be much longer together, let us laugh and be merry while we are, for I never before saw so many in so small a party, who had so much cause for real happiness as we have. For when I look the world around —"

What splendid figures of speech Master Hewet would have adorned his eloquence with, can never now be even guessed at, for just as he was "looking the world around," a servitor entered to announce a messenger from Lord Talbot.

The merchant had scarcely heard the name, ere he had left the room, not waiting even to finish his sentence.

Flora's eyes were immediately fixed upon Edward; his change of countenance too plainly told her, that all she had guessed was true.

The merchant was away but for a minute, and when he returned, his countenance was beaming more radiantly than ever; delight appeared in every feature.

When Osborne perceived this, his heart sank within him. He arose, and asked permission—"to away," as he said, "to his affairs upon the Bridge."

"Not to the Bridge, boy," replied Hewet; "what is to be done there, to-day, I myself must do, after I have given audience to Lord Talbot. Think of that—a Cloth-worker and his wife solicited to grant audience to a lord! Oh, money, money! get money, boy, and you will have no lack of lords."

"Not if you've a lovely daughter too," whispered the Bridge-shooter into the ear of Flora.

"But come, astir, astir," said the merchant, "for we all have our work to do." A great clattering of horses' feet was now heard in the court-yard. "Come, Willy-of-the-Bridge, mount, and away to your fortune, man; or mount and away *with* your fortune, I should say, for I believe Eoline, in your eyes, is the only fortune, you will deign to look upon as fortune. The Bridge-shooter will with you. Flora must remain with my spouse here, for she must be well attired to receive so great a personage as Shrewsbury's young heir.

"But who then," said Edward, "is to accompany your daughter to the Heath?"

"Who!" exclaimed Hewet, "why, who is there but you?"

"I!" ejaculated Osborne.

"You! yes, you," replied the merchant; "is there anything so wondrous strange in such an arrangement, that you needs must stare your eyes out? It is not the first time you have protected Anne by some hundreds, is it?"

"Perhaps," joined in Flora, maliciously, "perhaps Edward would rather Master Walter Lerue escorted her."

"There is no Master Lerue," said Edward almost savagely. "But am I to take Anne to the Heath alone?—and when do you follow?"

"Oh," replied Hewet, "to-morrow, or next day, or the day after that, or, in fact, as soon as we can get away. But do not be afraid of remaining there alone—the Heath is safe enough now; we shall hear no more of robbers."

"I am no coward, master, I fear not robbers," said Edward, rather piqued; "I never trembled, even when surrounded by them—but—I——"

"Yes, dear, quite ready," exclaimed the merchant, turning from Edward, and going towards the door, through which Alyce and Eoline had a short time before gone out.

What annoyed Osborne dreadfully, was to see Flora and the Bridge-shooter laughing in a corner; he felt convinced that he formed the subject of their mirth—but why? they knew not the secret of his heart, at least he thought so.

Flora having adjusted a warm kind of wrapper round William's throat, now came to Osborne, and with a very grave face, said softly to him, "Now mind, Edward, that you are a good boy; don't let your violent flow of spirits, and well-known gallantry, o'erleap discretion; fortunately Anne is *very* ugly, and you are about the same, so perhaps my warning is uncalled for: if you should find any lack of subjects to converse on during these long evenings, turn to that most interesting of all games for two—scratch-cradle, you'll find it very agreeable, I can assure you; the only difficulty is, in avoiding your own fingers coming in contact with those of your opponent. I have known two hands get so entangled through that game, that they have never been again disunited until death; so be on your guard not to entangle your fingers with those of Anne Hewet, or you may rue it." Having said this, she gave him two or three knowing nods of the head, and walked away.

So full was his mind of the strangeness of the situation he suddenly found himself in, that he scarcely comprehended what Flora was talking about; and had he wished to have replied, he would have been prevented, for the reality of his unlooked-for position was now made manifest by the lovely girl entering with her mother. Anne was equipped for her journey in cloaks and furs, whose costliness evinced the high respectability of the wearer; for, as we have before observed, fur, in those days, was a distinguishing mark, the different kinds being appropriated to the various classes of society. Mona would have accompanied them to the Heath, but one of the merchant's ships being about to sail for Italy, it was thought advisable for her to remain in safety where she then was, until the moment arrived when she might leave these shores for ever, and return to her native land.

If Edward Osborne had puzzled his brain for a whole month to have invented a most perplexing position for himself to be placed in, he could not have conceived one half so embarrassing as that in which he soon found himself. Not an hour before, and he had been congratulating himself upon the almost certainty of being enabled to fly without even the pain of bidding her farewell, when, all at once, as if by magic, here he found himself, not only in her presence, but, as it were, actually shut up alone with her in a little box; for the weather being still cold, and Anne, remaining still an invalid, all the windows of the cabin of the barge were closed, as well as the front doors.

It was quite astonishing to observe the altered conduct of each to the other, since each had discovered their own new turn of feeling. It is true that Flora had endeavoured to open the eyes of Anne to Osborne's passion, but if Anne had doubted what she heard when Flora spoke, her doubt was doubt no longer, for Edward never once even raised his eyes to hers, indeed, he seemed studiously to avoid such a presumptuous act. Had they been placed in such a position but one little month before, and these two had been the happiest, the gayest of human beings; but now they sat motionless, speechless, and all because each loved the

other to desperation, but dared not reveal that love, fearful, nay, certain, it would find no reflex in the other's heart.

They remained so long silent, that silence became quite painful. Anne, at last, said very gently—"Edward, I wish you could adjust this cushion for me in some way more easy for my head."

Osborne quite started at the sudden appeal—"Certainly, dear Anne," he replied, as he hastened to fulfil her wishes; "that will, I think, be much more comfortable."

Not a word more was spoken, and Edward resumed his seat; after another prolonged fit of quietude, Anne exclaimed—"You have made me more uneasy than ever."

"I'm sorry for that, Anne," he replied, as he again placed, and replaced, and altered, and re-altered, the position of every cushion that had been arranged for Anne's greater comfort.

One, she said, was too high, another was too low, this was too hard, that was too soft. "Oh dear, oh dear," she exclaimed at last, "you must think me very fretful, and so I am, and I have been so for a long time; but it is very ungrateful of me to let such trifles annoy and worry me, as I do now; I used not to be so wayward—used I, Edward?"

Edward made quite a long speech, denying that he had ever found her so; nor did he think her so at that moment.

"You were always kind to little Anne, Edward," she said, looking at him most affectionately; this was the first time their eyes had met, since they had been in the barge alone, and why, no one can tell, but they both felt very awkward; and both once more became silent.

Presently Anne began to rub one hand with the other, and said—"Notwithstanding all these furs, and I am sure we are shut in closely enough to keep me warm, yet my hands are as cold as ice—just feel this one, Edward—did you ever feel anything so cold? Why, Edward," she said, quite anxiously, "your hands are in a perfect fever—they are burning."

"The better to warm yours, dear Anne," he replied, as he placed her hands between his own: as he gently rubbed them, which Anne said, "made her feel much more comfortable," his fingers passed accidentally between hers; he coloured up, for at that moment, Flora's remark about the danger of fingers becoming entangled, crossed his mind; he heaved an inward sigh, and thought, "would to heaven that these could become, from this entanglement, so united that they should never separate but in death!" It struck him as very remarkable, that until that moment, he had never noticed the extreme beauty of Anne's hand; how he longed to kiss it, and he felt that formerly he should have done so, and neither would have thought it strange, but now he dared not.

The warmer the beautiful girl's hands were made, the more fluent became their tongues, and a very long time was passed over by Anne relating, very minutely, all that she was aware of, as having happened to her, after she had left the cottage on the night of the robbery. He listened with intense interest to all she said; but when she came to relate that part, where she had attempted to escape by climbing to the gallery, he held his breath from sheer anxiety; and just as Anne was describing her falling backwards to the ground, a dreadful shock came

against the barge, which threw her completely into his arms; she was too much alarmed to feel that he had pressed her, though gently, to his heart; in an instant she had recovered her former position, and Edward hurried out of the cabin to enquire the cause of the shock. It was a mere nothing; some idle boys, not understanding the rowers' art, had run foul of the merchant's barge, but had done no mischief.

Poor Edward, when he returned, longed to have renewed his former happy labour, but could not muster courage to attempt it, until Anne said—"You must now, Edward, unless you are tired, rub my other hand, as you did this."

Osborne felt that all this was but a bad way of carrying out his resolve to leave and forget Anne as speedily as possible; but his reason, as it does in almost all such cases, gave way to his desires. It now became his turn to carry on the truthful romance by recounting all the anxieties caused by her disappearance, and all their endeavours to recover her. So much interest did his fair companion appear to feel in all he said, and so many kind looks did she cast upon the narrator, that Osborne felt inspired, and dilated so largely upon every point, that just as he had arrived at the moment of his placing her in her mother's longing arms, the barge stopped, and they found themselves at Putney.

As they walked towards the Heath, their minds, unknown to each other, turned upon exactly the like reflection, namely, that how often had they before taken the self-same walk, but with what different feelings to those they experienced now. Osborne, finding no excuse for holding his sweet companion's hand as they walked along, seemed to have lost the charm that had inspired him, and indeed her too, for they spoke very little for the rest of their walk, and what they did say was of no interest to be repeated.

When they reached the cottage, the first thing Anne did was to hasten to her old friend, the old man of the show.

While she was with him, Osborne sat musing over the fire, and murmured to himself—"Well, he who would not be killed by slow poison, should cease to take the drug, however delicious to the sense it be, when once he knows its deadly power; the smallest dose will do if long continued; better then at once to dash to pieces the tempting phial, and thus disperse the baneful influence it surrounds, than treasure an enemy so subtle, merely because it gives a pleasure to the eye to gaze upon the beauties of the vessel in which it lies. Oh, I have taken a fuller dose to-day of that fell poison of my heart—fuller than any yet; my heart feels overflowing with the resistless intoxicating fluid; my only escape lies in instant flight. The merchant will be here to-morrow at least I pray so, and then—but he must be mad to have acted thus. Does not he know that his daughter's fair? does he forget that I have eyes. If he do know, as know he must, how little danger there is for her, it still is cruelty to me, cruelty to place me thus so near a shrine he knows I dare not kneel to, yet before which he cannot but be sure that I, as well as all mankind, would think it bliss to offer up a heart—a sacrifice a life! But why should he think all this? If I thought it not till now, why should he now think it? No! I am the madman, not he! Had I been open to him and told him the truth, he would have

applauded my resolution—have quicker aided me in my flight, and would not thus have added another link to the chain which binds my heart to her—would I could say to *her's*; but no, for then I feel the chain could never have been sundered."

It was a great relief to Osborne when Anne returned, to see the old man with her, and to learn that he would remain all the evening, and tell them all that had passed, and of the strange discovery he had made concerning his brother; for although it was not yet made quite manifest, yet there was but little doubt remaining of the truth.

Thus, then, the first dreaded evening passed over with tolerable safety to Osborne, at least he flattered himself so; for he said to himself—"we have scarcely exchanged one word," but he forgot how often the poison of the heart is taken through the eyes; and that night his eyes devoured enough to have destroyed a thousand hearts—poor Osborne!

We must now take the reader to a very different scene.

It may be remembered that on one particular night the Cripple, who had taken refuge in the ruined dwelling over the Black Arch of the Clink, had witnessed an awful scene of four wretches bearing the murdered body of Ray the Clipper, into one of the other two houses near at hand; and it may also be remembered that Spikely had intimated that the body should be buried in the vault beneath the street; into this vault we will now lead the reader.

Just over the spot where the body had been interred, Horton was sitting upon some damp straw; his legs were tied together, and fastened to the opposite wall in such a manner as to prevent him drawing them up; his body was fastened by a chain that passed round his chest, just below his armpits, thus rendering it impossible, although his hands were at liberty, for him to reach his ankles to loosen the cords that bound his feet together.

Soon after he had left the court of justice, he had been waylaid by some of Spikely's ruffians, and had been brought to the miserable hole in which he now was confined.

The first system pursued by Spikely to torture the unfortunate wretch, was to introduce himself quietly into the vault while it was in total darkness, and then to work upon the other's fears, by speaking as though from the grave, for Horton was not even yet aware of Spikely's escape from death.

It may easily be imagined the horror which took possession of Horton's mind, when first he heard the well-known voice of him, he believed he had murdered. Not only did the other speak of his own untimely death, but brought vividly before the now-almost phrenzied imagination of his victim, every circumstance attending the murder of Sir Filbut in the wood—"He sends you this," said the awful voice, "in token of his gratitude: use it upon thyself, murderer, and farewell until we meet, where parting we never more shall know."

Horton now heard something fall by his side. A cold perspiration burst from every pore; he listened until his ears seemed pained by the awful silence, which refused to satisfy their craving for some sound; all was still—still and dark, as the grave. Such horrid pictures did his fancy now portray, that they drove him to the brink of madness; he

raved and screamed for help ; for some time not a sound was heard ; at last a ray of light came through a chink in the door, that seemed to him as a ray from heaven.

The door opened, and the gigantic ruffian, known before as Bludgeon Billy, stood in the way, holding a lamp—"What the devil ails you ? exclaimed the ruffian ; "have you seen a ghost, that you shiver and shake so ?"

"No," replied Horton, "but if ever a voice came from hell to torture a being of earth, that voice I have heard but now."

"What are you staring at?" said the other, as Horton riveted his eyes upon something lying close beside him ; he answered not, but kept his gaze still rooted, as it were, upon the object of his fear: it was his own dagger, the one with which he knew he had slain Sir Filbut, but which he believed had been for years buried beneath the flood. Before he had power to speak, he heard a horrid laugh come from the next vault, and in another moment Spikely stood before him.

Horton at once saw that he had been duped—that by some strange chance, unaccountable to him, Spikely had escaped the intended doom.

"Have you no kind word," said Spikely, sneeringly, "no burst of joy to welcome an old friend? but absent friends are soon, by some, forgotten—but not by me. No, no, friend Horton ; I owe you a heavy debt, and would have sought you round the globe, rather than not repay you, ay, and with my own hand too ! Do you not remember our last meeting? It made such an impression on me," he said, pointing to a deep scar in his throat, "that while this remains, my obligation to good Harry Horton can never be forgotten."

"You mean to murder me?" said Horton, trembling.

"That may depend upon yourself, mayhap, or, perhaps, upon my humour ; but if you are to die by these hands, that dagger shall be the weapon ; you know how well it does its work. But first, there is one upon whom I have sworn to be revenged, more deeply sworn than I have sworn to be revenged on you ; you must help me in the matter ; and upon your willingness to serve me, may depend your own fate, which you must now feel lies within these hands. You know to whom I allude. She baffles me still, although I know her hiding-place. 'Tis you must draw her forth. Here are the necessary implements for writing ; write what I shall dictate ; she will never doubt her beloved nephew, and will walk into the trap as unconsciously as a mouse."

Horton, who never cared much about sacrificing any one, if, by doing so, he served himself, made no hesitation to write whatever Spikely desired.

The purport of the letter was to pray of Nan to meet Horton that night at the Cardinal's Hat, and so artfully and temptingly worded, that Spikely chuckled again when it was finished, to think how certain he now was of his long-sought revenge.

Horton having done all that Spikely had commanded, most abjectly prayed for his life ; but to all his prayers, his oaths of sorrow for the past, his promises of high reward—for he declared that he knew of a store of valuables that still remained secreted, belonging to the

murdered knight—to all this Spikely would make no positive reply, but merely muttered—"We shall see, we shall see; but first let me fulfil my oath to Nan, and then your turn shall come. Farewell!"

Spikely turned upon his heel, and followed by Bludgeon Billy, with the lamp, left Horton to his own miserable reflections. He heard the door bolted securely; but had it been left wide open, it had been the same to him, bound as he was. He gave himself up to despair, for he knew his enemy's unrelenting temper too well to hope for mercy. He made a desperate effort to loosen the chain that bound him, but the effort proved abortive; he felt about the wall behind him—the bricks were old and rotten—had he some tool, with which to work upon them, then it seemed yet possible that he might still release himself from the chain: his only hope now lay in the dagger—a strange hope for him.

The reader will, doubtless, wonder how that weapon, once again, came into the possession of Spikely, but the chance was very simple. When the fire upon the Bridge became known to the "Bishop's Birds," numbers of them flew to their boats to pick up what they might. When the upper portion of the merchant's dwelling fell into the stream, many valuable things floated about in all directions; these were quickly picked up by the "Birds," and it was in one of Osborne's writing-cases, which had fallen into their hands, that the dagger had been found, and it was only just before Spikely had paid his ghost-like visit to Horton, that it had fallen under his notice; the moment he saw it, he determined to use it as we have seen he did; but he little thought in giving Horton that dagger, he was bestowing upon him the means to escape his vengeance; but so it proved.

The instant Horton had formed the notion of a way to escape, he felt about the ground in the direction in which he knew the dagger lay; he could not resist a shudder as his hand touched it; but all sensitiveness was then, to him, out of place, so seizing it firmly, he turned as well as he could towards the wall, and set to work. It was but a slow process, for as he scraped away the bricks around the heavy iron staple, the inner portion he soon found was of firmer texture; but still the progress he made held forth a hope—his only hope, and brought him courage to persevere. After some hours of unceasing labour, to his unspeakable joy, the staple suddenly gave way; the chain was now removed from around his breast, and, with the aid of the sharp edge of the dagger, the cords that bound his feet were soon cut asunder. He stood erect, and felt as if already free; but his greatest labour was still to come. He had guessed, and guessed rightly, from so plainly hearing every footfall that passed from the house into the street above, that the crown of the vault was close beneath the upper surface of the road. The only chance of escape lay in his power, by the aid of the dagger, which had already worked so well in his cause, to scrape away the mouldering mortar between the bricks of the arch, and thus remove a sufficient number of them to form an aperture large enough for him to force his body through; even this he succeeded in accomplishing, but not until many a weary hour had come and gone: as the loosened bricks fell in, he perceived it was already break of day; he collected all the rubbish he could find; fortunately for him there lay an old trunk in one corner, it was but a small one, yet

by placing it upon the little mound he had raised, he found it sufficiently elevated to enable him to gain a firm resting for his arms upon the road above; by great bodily exertion he at last succeeded in lifting himself, and eventually in reaching the surface.

While he was thus employed, the agony he suffered, fearing that some of the ruffians might come past, and annihilate every hope, was almost worse than the certainty of death. Upon finding himself really free, his first thought was to hasten to Nan, and warn her of the plan laid for her destruction; he had a double motive in this, for he knew that with her he should be safer than elsewhere, for he imagined that Spikely, upon discovering his escape, would be sure he had flown to Nan to warn her, and that, therefore, her old dwelling would be the last place where it would be likely now to find her. He hastened from the Clink, and we will now leave him on his road to Nan's abode.

Fate seemed to have armed herself against Edward Osborne; at every turn, there she stood to oppose him, do what he would, or rather attempt what he would, for she appeared determined he should do nothing but what she liked. His plan was to have flown the enchantment of Anne's charms—fate placed him closer within their spell; he sought every opportunity to avoid her presence—fate invented new opportunities for continually placing her near him.

"Well," thought Osborne, when he rose the next morning, after arriving at the Heath, "the merchant will, no doubt, come to-day, and until he do, I will manage that the old man shall be Anne's companion, so that I can remain in my own apartment."

Now it so happened that fate had determined just the contrary, for, very early in the day, a messenger arrived with two letters from the merchant—one for Osborne, telling him not to expect his master until he saw him, for a circumstance had occurred of such moment, that it was absolutely necessary he should remain in London, for how long, he could not at that instant say; he might be at the Heath the next day, or he might not be there for a week; at all events he would write again the next morning, and not only acquaint Osborne with the extraordinary circumstance alluded to, but also what he wished and expected Edward to do in the business. There was one sentence, inserted by the express desire of Alyce, which terribly troubled Edward, and that was, "That being so alarmed for the safety of her child, Osborne was not to lose sight of her for a single moment that it was possible for him to be near her. The other letter was to the old man, now addressed as Wilfred Mortley, desiring him to hasten to London as speedily as possible, thus taking away the only stay Edward felt he had to fall back upon.

Osborne proposed accompanying the old man as far as the Ferry; but then the injunction "not to quit his precious charge for a single moment," came across his mind, so that if he went, Anne must go too; and so she did, and Edward then determined, however painful it might prove to him, to do his duty, and to act up to the strict letter of his instructions; therefore not one instant of that day did he quit her presence; and when the day was ended, he was astonished to find how quickly it had passed, and how much happier he had been than he could possibly have expected—"Happy, happy, indeed," he said, "would such a life

as this be, blessed by mutual love; but such happiness is not for Edward Osborne. If I were as vain as some men, what might my vanity not lead me to hope for? More than once to-night, while I was reading to her, I fancied I saw her gazing at me with a fixed expression, very different to that of former times; there was a sadness, but a kindness in her look, that to one who dared have hope; but no, no, I dare not! Had she been poor, then might my motives not have been misunderstood; but as it is, I would not have her love me, no, not for worlds!"

It is astonishing, in almost every action of life, how habit softens down the sharp and rugged points, that at first sight cause us dread. He who is surrounded by continual dangers, in time will gaze on danger, and scarcely know it bears that name; so, to a degree, found Edward Osborne, for even on the second morning, instead of feeling dread at meeting Anne, he thought the day broke very slowly, and when it did, it was quite astonishing how quickly he performed his toilet, and yet, perhaps, he never did so with more care. He was down in the lower room, very busy putting on fresh logs to the fire—moving and removing every bit of the breakfast, which, as we have before said, was rather a substantial meal; this he was doing, to render it more tempting to the eye; and then he suddenly ran off to the farm, to scold them for having forgotten the eggs—"things," that he declared, "every one at the farm knew, as well as he did, how agreeable they were to their young mistress." And then he arranged them himself in a very pretty, tasty flat basket, with moss and some winter flowers; and then when he returned with them, he went and passed his hand over every crevice of the window, to feel that no air would come in just at the back of Anne's seat. And then he began to think Anne was a long time coming, and that he had better have the hour announced to her—"But I suppose, poor girl, she was fatigued with our walking so much yesterday, so a little rest will do no harm." Having made up his mind to this, he sat down, and exerted his patience to the utmost. At last her foot was heard. One bound, and he was at the door to open it for her; and now it was discovered, that, notwithstanding the laziness he accused her of, she had come down exactly one hour before her usual time. So much more at ease did he become this day, that long before noon, he said to Anne—"Dear Anne, I trust your father will not put himself out of the way to hurry down on your account; indeed, I almost think I had better write, and tell him——"

"Tell him what, Edward?"

"Why, that how safe you are, and how well you are, and how happy you are, and that as long as there is the slightest necessity for your father's presence in town, that I shall—or you will—you know I shall say all that sort of thing."

Anne, not exactly comprehending the sort of thing he would say, thought it better to wait the promised communication from her father. Now it was very strange, that, from that moment until they were retiring for the night, it never struck them once that the communication had not arrived. What they could both have been thinking of, or talking of, so completely to have forgotten the circumstance, was very odd; but forget it they most assuredly did.

There was one subject upon which Anne had been talking, during their long rambles of that day, which brought poor Edward down from the airy castles he for a moment had been building, and made him view his unhappy state in the most wretched light, and that was by her having entered upon the subject of the misery that must spring from young girls being thought wealthy.—“In such a case,” she said, “how can she ever believe in the unselfish offer of man’s love? That is the one great reason which will ever keep me from wedding. I would be loved for myself, not for my gold. But rich as my father is known to be, how could I ever be sure that no unworthy motive prompted the seeming affection offered me? How could I ever be convinced that I was not deceived? Oh, would that I were poor!”

“Would that you were,” thought Edward, “and that I were rich!”

Now selfish as this wish appears, it was the offspring of a purely unselfish feeling, for in his mind, at that moment, he was picturing to himself with what rapture would he have flung his heart and all his wealth at her dear feet!

Their constant contiguity was causing dreadful havoc in both their hearts. Now when Anne placed her arm through his as they strolled about the Heath, it was done with that sweet dependence which tells of love, though with a silent tongue; and then would Edward, still as unconscious as herself of what he did, press that arm much closer to his side than he was wont to do, but so gradually, so imperceptibly had this mutual change of their manners to each other grown upon them, that when on visiting the grave of poor Lillia, Anne wept, and rested her head on Edward’s breast, and Edward kissed a tear from off her cheek, neither he nor she felt there was any thing extraordinary in that kindness of feeling. They read much less that evening, and talked much more; and although Edward wished, or fancied he wished, to speak about his intended exile, somehow or other he could not muster up courage to do so, for he began to fancy it might give Anne pain.

Not long before they were about to part for the night, Anne said—“By-the-by, Edward, there is one line in the note dear mother sent me enclosed in yours, that I cannot for my life make out—I wish you would try.”

We wonder, at that moment, what Edward would not have done to have pleased the lovely girl who sat before him; so, of course, he assented; and Anne, taking from her bosom a carefully-folded paper, placed it in Osborne’s hand. He had not half undone it, before, not only he, but she also, discovered it to be his own “Dream of love.” He looked to Anne inquiringly, and saw her face in a perfect flame—“Good Heavens, Anne!” he exclaimed, “how could this have come into your possession?”

Poor Anne felt like a culprit suddenly detected. If her face just before had been in a flame, it was so no longer; shame had quenched the fire, and left naught but the pale ashes there.—“Oh,” replied the confused girl, endeavouring to answer quite unconcernedly, “it was Flora gave it to me; she said it was some waste paper you had thrown aside; but thinking I should like the lines, she brought them to me.”

“And do you like them, Anne?” inquired Osborne.

"Otherwise I had not kept them," was her reply.

"But they are half obliterated," and Edward again looked upon the paper.

Anne felt the colour again rising to her face, for she too well remembered the tears she had shed on the night she had first beheld them.

Edward offered to copy them afresh; but Anne replied—"They would do very well for her;" and then carelessly, so she intended it to appear, took them again, but now placed them in the silken purse, which hung from her side, and giving Edward her mother's note, escaped, as speedily as might be, to the seclusion of her own room.

They both experienced that night a strange bewilderment of feeling—a kind of happiness they had never felt before. Peace be upon their slumbers, nor let them dream of the dreadful storm that shall break over them, before the sun again shall set!

Never was a more lovely morning seen than that which followed the night we have just past over. The air, though sharp, was clear and exhilarating, and the sun, as he smiled on all around, seemed greatly to cheer, if not prodigiously to warm all nature in its earliest spring.

As they had not received any further news from London, both Anne and Edward determined to spend that morning in writing very long letters, one to the merchant, the other to her mother. Edward was quite astonished at the happy vein that ran through the whole of his lengthy epistle.

When they had ended their labour, they were about to prepare for a journey to the letter-carrier at the Ferry, when who should arrive but the old man. His face was so brimful of joy, that they felt sure that the news he brought was of a happy nature.

"Yes, yes, my children," said the old man, as they led him to the most comfortable of all the easy seats, "my news is indeed of a happy nature, and of a nature to make us all thrice happy, for it concerns my little Anne!"

"But of your own affairs, grandfather," said Anne, for she still always called him by that endearing name "what fortune has befallen you, good or bad?"

"Too good for my deserts," said the old man, "too good, far too good. There is no longer doubt of Algernon Mortley being my long-lost brother; and although all is not yet quite settled, 'tis next to certain, that the old beggar you purchased, your willing slave of the iron ring, will yet be a wealthy man."

"Oh, that is happy news indeed!" said Anne. "And how is my dear mother, and my no less dear father, and Flora, and all? And when are they to be here? and——"

"Stop, stop, child," ejaculated the old man, smiling; "you forget that the memory of age is not so capacious as that of youth: why, I shall have forgotten your first question, before you reach your last, if you run on at that rate. First then, your mother and her spouse are happy beyond expression, and would have written all their happiness down in black and white, had I not craved to have a little share in their happiness, by being their mouthpiece to tell you all that has happened."

"Then tell us quickly, grandfather!" exclaimed Anne, "for good news cannot come too quickly."

"Oh, 'twill make your little heart dance for joy," replied the old man; "but you must not let your delight rob you of your reason; so keep a fast hold of your sober senses, while I tell you. Well then, you must know—yes, you must know that when Lord Talbot—Why, Edward, what ails you, boy?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," replied Osborne, looking deadly pale, for the name of Talbot seemed now to turn his blood to ice.

"Well then," continued the old man, "when Lord Talbot came—Now I'll defy either of you, clever as you, no doubt, think yourselves, to guess what his lordship came for?"

Edward merely groaned inwardly; and Anne innocently shook her head.

"Oh, you puss, you puss!" said the old man, pretending to box both the ears of the lovely girl; "it is a lucky thing for mankind, that you have been kept as secluded as you have, or you would have had terrible things to have answered for."

"But, grandfather, dear," said Anne, "what can I have to do with all this?"

"You have every thing to do with it; for know that young Lord Talbot, the handsome Lord George, the heir to the earldom of Shrewsbury, has formally demanded your hand in marriage!"

Anne screamed outright, and would have fallen to the ground, had not Edward sprang forward, and caught her in his arms.—"It has come at last!" he exclaimed, "the dreaded hour is come! Would to Heaven the earth could open at this instant, and swallow me up in death!"

"What means this madness?" said the old man. "Why, Edward, Edward, surely *you* too do not love her?"

"Love her!" exclaimed Edward, pressing the weeping girl closer and closer to his heart, "love is a word too weak, to paint one tythe of that deep soul-absorbing adoration, that fills my heart for her! I know that what I feel is madness—that what I say is senseless raving, and I feel now that I could tear out my tongue, for having thus betrayed me! Up to this moment, I have kept my secret closely sealed within my breast; I would not wrong the being I loved, by even disclosing to her my hopeless passion, fearing that pity for my sufferings might have moved her to forget herself. Surprise has wrung from me that which no mortal torture should have caused me to confess! 'Tis useless now to deny my love; but I will prove its proud sincerity! This moment shall see me fly from all that could render life endurable! Farewell, dear, dear, dear Anne, farewell!"

"Edward, Edward," Anne exclaimed, clinging to him, "do not leave me thus! you know not—cannot know, how dearly——"

"Hush, child," said the old man, gently placing himself between them, as he loosened her arms from Edward's neck, and softly placed her, weeping, on the couch. Then turning to Edward, who seemed stupefied with grief, he said kindly—"You love her, do you not? But do not answer—I know you do; then by that love, I command you leave her; she knows not what she says, and now might utter words, that

afterwards might cause repentance. Be; for this time, advised by age—but quit not this house—I mean not now; go to your room—I will soon follow, and then my advice, though perhaps not worthy the taking, shall be at least sincere.”

Edward did not speak; but taking the old man's hand between both of his, pressed it fervently. He made a movement, as if to approach the weeping girl; but the old man gently forced him back. He gave one last look of intense love towards Anne, and burst from the apartment.

When he was gone, the old man approached Anne, and seating himself by her side, took her hand kindly in his own.—“Child,” he said, “many a year has now passed by, since, once upon a summer's eve, an old man sat by a weeping child, her hand in his, as yours is now in mine, and the old man tried to dry the tears of that weeping child. Do you remember a picture of the kind?”

Anne turned her eyes towards the old man, and sadly smiling through a veil of tears, threw her arms fondly around his neck.

“I feel you do,” he said, as he pressed her affectionately to his heart. “Well then, Anne, if that same child be weeping now, the same old man is by to comfort her; he brought her hope before, and why may he not try to do so now?”

“There is no hope, grandfather, there is no hope!” said Anne, sobbing bitterly; “for would my father's pride allow him to refuse, he would not have the courage to deny a suitor of such power.”

“Your father has courage to do his will, depend on that. But why this strong, this sudden burst of anguish? Lord Talbot is handsome, talented, and great.”

“Were all his beauties, talents, or his greatness, augmented tenfold, and tenfold that again, I would not have him.”

“But wherein lies your powerful objection?” enquired the old man; “in my eyes he has no fault.”

“In mine,” said Anne, “he has all faults in one—his wish to wed me.”

“I never knew a maiden yet,” replied the old man, “who loathed a suitor, were he ne'er so worthless, with such intenseness as you now loath Lord Talbot, unless the little niche that lies in a woman's heart, destined one day to hold the form of love, had secretly been usurped or willingly filled up already; tell me then, child, and tell me with all the candour you used to speak your mind in our olden times—is not that little niche within your heart already filled?”

“It is,” said Anne, looking the old man full in the face, “and Edward's is the form I have placed there. Oh, grandfather,” she continued, again losing the little firmness she had for an instant assumed, “I knew not until I thought we were to part, how dearly, how madly I have loved him. Nor did I know his love for me till now. He knows not yet of mine, nor would I have him know it; but you must save me from despair. I want not to wed with any. All I would pray is, that I may not be forced to give my hand to one, while my heart is given to another.”

The old man promised to see her father again, and “little doubted,”

he said, "that much as he knew the merchant had set his heart upon the aggrandizement of his child, he might yet persuade him to find some means to avoid the promised union." Having relieved her mind to a degree upon this point, the old man ascended to Osborne's room.

We will not relate all the arguments the old man used to convince Edward how foolish he had been in giving way to a passion so hopeless; but we cannot resist stating that he did this in a way that must appear to our readers the very opposite course to that which he ought to have pursued, for notwithstanding the caution given him by Anne, he told Osborne all that had passed between them.

"Now you know, Edward, you know the unfortunate passion you have raised in her breast, you must see how necessary it is, if but for her peace of mind, that you immediately quit this place, and for ever."

Notwithstanding the dread necessity implied by the last words of the old man, Edward could not but feel a proud joy spring up in his heart, as he heard of Anne's confession of love for him; but he also felt that such confession rendered the task of leaving her doubly agonizing.

The old man now acquainted Osborne with his promise to Anne, of again seeing the merchant, and said—"And now, boy, as this will probably be the last evening you will ever pass with poor Anne, I need not tell you to be kind to her; nor that the greatest act of kindness on your part, will lie in *not* speaking of love. But above all things, I charge you, drop not a hint that I have disclosed to you her secret."

Not long after this, and the old man might be seen trudging along on his promised journey to London. How far Osborne obeyed the old man's injunctions we know not; nor do we know whether Edward told Anne, or Anne told Edward of her affection for him; nor indeed do we know, or if we do, we will not tell, what sighs and tears—what hope and fears were mutually exchanged; but this we do know, and this we may tell, that after passing through many a year of a long life, Edward always declared that that night was the most miserably happy of his whole existence.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

And by the throate-bole he caught Alein;
And he him hent dispiteously again,
And on the nose he smote him with his fist;
Down ran the bloody stream upon his breast.

CHAUCER.

WHEN Horton reached Nan's abode it was broad day; but, although comparatively only a few hours had elapsed since he had been compelled to write to her, he still found he had arrived too late to warn her. He here learnt, that after the night had somewhat advanced, a lad had been there, coming, as he said, "from Master Horton to Widow Spikely;" he had brought a letter, which caused the dame to don her walking gear, and had then, although so late, quitted the place with the lad.

"Then she is lost," said Horton to himself, as he turned away;

"the fiends have caught her in their trap; the next will be set for me, which they will take good care shall be a closer one than even that from which I have escaped. I must fly this land, for Spikely will never rest again till I am hunted down."

How little would he have had to dread in that quarter, had he known all; but we must not anticipate. He passed up Chancery Lane, and strolled about the distant fields the whole of the early part of that day devising plans, not only for his own safety, but to draw down vengeance upon the heads of all his foes.

We will now look back, and casting a retrospective glance into the remaining portion of the Cardinal's Hat, see what strange things happened there.

"I think we shall nab her now," said Spikely to Brassinjaw, as they sat gloomily opposite each other in the lower room. Brassinjaw made no answer. "Why don't you speak, you winking owl? Aid me with nand and heart in this, or may be, we two may have a slight account to settle, that will leave no balance in your favour."

"I have spoken 'til I'm tired," said Brassinjaw, doggedly, "I have spoken, and what's the good; I tell you I never did relish murder, even when it would have served myself; and I see no fun in putting a rope round ones own neck merely to please another."

"Who said I meant to murder her?" exclaimed Spikely.

"Why you," replied the other, "in act, if not in words; have you not been into the next room a dozen times, pulling and tugging at the ope that opens yonder trap; and is that not telling me what you would be at? But, by all the saints, I swear——" He was here interrupted by hearing some one at the top of the stairs, that descended to where they were, whistling a well-known air.

"She's caught! by Heavens, she's caught!" exclaimed Spikely, starting up and hurrying towards the sliding panel, which he opened, and as he passed through, with a flickering lamp in one hand, with the other, he menaced Brassinjaw, as he said, "Remember!"

The panel closed just as the door opened, and Nan entered the room. "'Tis late at night to see a lady," said Brassinjaw, rising with pretended politeness; "what would you, worthy dame?"

"I am summoned here," replied Nan, "by one who calls himself Harry Horton—is he here?"

"Why, now I look again, I know thee well," said Brassinjaw, not answering her question, "the witness on the adverse side at the trial—I remember, Dame Spikely; well then, he who expects you is already here."

"He is? then lose not a moment—shew me to him."

"You'll see him quite soon enough, depend upon it," said Brassinjaw; "but since you wish it, he is in the next apartment—you can pass through here."

As he placed his hand upon the panel, he hesitated, for one spark of pity still had found a spot to hide in, in his breast; but remembering the desperate character he had to deal with, he pushed aside the panel as he said—"He's there!"

The little lamp that Spikely had taken in sent forth scarcely any

light at all. Nan stopped at the opening for an instant, but she had too long been accustomed to strange holes and corners to fear, so straight-way entered.

The moment she had passed, the panel was violently shut from the inner side. Nan uttered a loud shriek, as Brassinjaw imagined, upon seeing her husband.

A violent struggle was made against the inner side of the panel, and then Brassinjaw fancied he heard a horrid sound, as of some one suffering in strangulation.—“By Heavens, he’ll kill her; and I shall be implicated in the murder. I’ll hazard all, and call assistance.”

Brassinjaw ran to the door; it was fastened on the outer side.

“Don’t kick up a row,” said the lad on the other side; “I shan’t unbar it ‘til I’m told by Spikely.”

“The villain!” said Brassinjaw; “then must I try my strength ‘gainst his—he shall not murder her!” He flew to the panel, he could not move it, he began to try and burst it in, when it suddenly flew aside, and Spikely was in the opening. Brassinjaw instinctively drew out his knife—“You’ve killed her!” he exclaimed.

“‘Tis a lie!” said the other, closing the panel behind him; “I have but given her a blow, not half so hard as those she was used to once: ‘twill silence her for a time—not long, though, if she be what she was: while she’s quiet, I’ll have a word or two with you, mayhap a blow, unless you at once give me the clear half of the five hundred pounds you would have sold me for. What, fool! I have surprised you, have I? Did you think to reach the merchant’s unwatched by me? Do you suppose his serving men are all saints like himself? or that the one who took you in, and let you out, was not a creature of my own? he brought me every word you uttered, and but for the chance of the fire on the Bridge, you had learnt ere this the sort of man you had to deal with. Your money I know you keep in yonder cupboard—give me the key!”

“Nor key, nor money will you have from me,” replied Brassinjaw; “nor shall you have that woman’s life, if it is not gone already. Ha, ha, ha!” continued Brassinjaw, laughing contemptuously in Spikely’s face. “Oh, you may frown, and stare your blearing eyes out of your head before you’ll frighten me! Your chest is broad, but mine is broader; your arms are strong, but mine are stronger; your knife I know is sharp—and bloody—bloody!” and he repeated the word, as he leant forward to give greater force to the sound, “but mine is keener and cleaner.”

“Hell-dog!” exclaimed Spikely, as with his uplifted knife he sprang upon Brassinjaw: there was now no retreating for either; the struggle was for life or death; like two thorough-bred bull-dogs, they made no barking in their fight, but tore each other, uttering no sound, or if they did, it was but the low growl of fell determination: by some strange chance they each lost the hold of their knives at the self same moment; their hands were in an instant upon each other’s throat; this seemed the last struggle for them both; they reeled, and reeled again; and just as they were falling, the floor passed away from beneath their feet—they sank into the roaring waters that thundered beneath the Bridge.

So deadly was their grasp, that even this shock failed to make either let go his hold. Over and over they tumbled, as they went dashing

down the cataract, which at that moment was at its deepest fall: the varied currents, as they passed through the different arches, formed numerous eddies; into one of the wildest of these the bodies, now nearly lifeless, had found their way, and there they spun round, and round, and round. As death was approaching now with rapid strides, every sinew seemed to contract, and thus their hold became more firm than ever. A barge that had slipped its moorings in the upper stream, flew through the Bridge, and striking against the bodies, forced them from the eddy into the rushing stream; and on, and on again they went, but life was now extinct.

The boy at the door, hearing the death-struggle, became alarmed for his own safety, and fled the place.

"Well," said the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, about midday, after the night of which we have just been writing, "well, I only say, it's vastly odd, friend Catchemayde; but, so sure as I am standing before your shop window, and chatting with you, so sure is it that Master Brassinjaw has never opened his door yet to-day."

"Well, it is odd," said Catchemayde, "it is odd, but I've quite enough of my own affairs to trouble my head with, without thinking of other folks—heigho!"

"How uncommonly often, friend Catchemayde, you do sigh since you got married," observed the little arrow-maker.

"Ay," replied the other, "I begin to think that sighs are the cradle and coffin of love—a man sighs to get a wife, and then he sighs a plaguy deal more to get rid of her."

"Oh, talking of wives," said the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, "do you know there are strange things said about Lord Talbot? they do say that he is always at Merchant Hewet's; and they do say, that he has been, in disguise, a courting sweet Mistress Hewet; and they do say, that unless the moon should fall down to prevent it, which is not very likely, that sweet Mistress Anne will be the young lord's wife."

"Poh!" observed Catchemayde, "people are always saying strange things—they said a vast number of strange things about me before I was married."

"Yes," said the other, "and a great many stranger things about your wife, after you were. Good morning." And the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker was out of sight in a minute.

Horton, who was now, more than ever, in fear of Spikely, believing he should be safer at some distance from London until he had matured his plans, strolled from the fields towards the City, intending to take the passage-boat, that ran regularly at that time, to Gravesend: as he approached Billingsgate, he saw a vast crowd close to the water's edge; he was not long left in doubt as to the cause, for he quickly learnt that two bodies had just been discovered half buried in the mud.

The crowd now opened to let the men pass who were bringing the bodies up the market-place; one was lying on the other; when they were laid upon one of the counters in the market, and some of the mud removed, it was discovered that the hands of each were on the other's throat. Horton was close by, and as some one took some water and washed off the mud from the face of one of the dead men, he there

beheld the features of his deadliest foe, Spikely. The other was soon recognised as Brassinjaw, the vintner of the Bridge; and every one present shuddered, on removing more of the mud, to find that the nails of Brassinjaw were completely embedded in the flesh of Spikely's throat. Horton turned away in horror, for he recollected all the scenes of guilt and depravity he had himself shared with both those now poor harmless, lifeless, clods of festering humanity.

Having found the body of Brassinjaw, the mystery of the house being closed seemed clearly accounted for, so it was at once broken open, when, in going into the lower rooms, a sight met their eyes, no less appalling than that which they had just left, for there they discovered the lifeless body of Nan, hanging to the rope that came down from the roof of the closet. In her despair, when she had somewhat recovered from the ill-usage of her husband, she had looked around for any means of escape—none but that of death presented itself: the rope she saw seemed to invite her to the deed: she had mounted on a stool, had tied the rope around her neck, then kicking away the stool, which was found upset close by her, her weight, in falling, had withdrawn the bolts, and thus unconsciously, she it was who had sent the two vile, miserable, wretches to their dread account. The body was immediately cut down, but it was found to have been dead for many hours. Thus ended three of the most determined wretches of our eventful tale.

We must now, once again, convey our indulgent readers to the Cottage on the Heath. More than one, nay, more than two, and even more than three days, had elapsed, since the old man left for London; but, strange as it may appear, although Anne had at his starting been so very anxious to learn the fate of his mission, which was merely that of breaking off all hope of a union with Lord Talbot, yet now, although he had been away upwards of three long days, her anxiety had so far vanished, that she was scarcely aware he had been away at all. What caused this wondrous change we shall soon be compelled to divulge.

It may be remembered that when Anne was a mere child, and travelling about from fair to fair, her mind had been strongly directed towards Protestantism by the old man, who was, in secret, a disciple of Luther, and the other leaders of the reformation; the seeds then sown had taken deep root in her heart, and had since produced an abundant harvest of religious convictions. Whether this tendency of hers towards the simpler doctrines of the Protestant Faith had any thing to do with the conversion of Edward Osborne, we cannot say; it might have had its weight in first opening his eyes to the truth; but we believe his ultimate cession from Catholicism, took place from no other causes, than those arising from deep reflection; but after the accession of Edward the sixth, conversion became almost a fashion. The shepherds of the reformed flock no longer feared to preach openly; and in every town, and in almost every village, was some place set apart, in which the celebration of the reformed worship might be attended.

Such a place had now been opened for some time past upon the Heath. The old crypt of the ruined chapel had been cleared out, and in doing this, many an antique work of architectural beauty was laid bare. The few openings that had originally let in a little, but a very little light,

had been completely filled up, so that the service which was now performed there, always took place by lamp-light. There were but few lights required, for the congregation was as yet but very small.

The old man had been, as might naturally be expected, a constant attendant, and with him Anne, and sometimes Osborne also; the merchant, who had never been a bigot in religion, also felt pleasure at times in listening to the pastor's reading of the scriptures, and would often declare he had derived vast comfort from the holy man's lecture which followed.

It was scarcely midday, when the old man presented himself at the Cottage. As he approached the sitting-room, the door of which was ajar, he heard the voice of Osborne reading aloud; the words were from the Bible. He opened the door so gently, that those within the room heard him not, and there he beheld a sight, that considering the exhortations he had given to Edward at their parting, was one that clearly proved his commands had not been *quite* strictly attended to, for there sat Edward and Anne close together, her one hand resting affectionately upon his shoulder, the other hand closely locked in his own. They were both intently perusing the Holy Book, but Osborne was reading aloud.

"Well," thought the old man, "this is a pretty way of two despairing hearts setting about parting for ever; but as different people have different ways of doing the same thing; I suppose this is theirs."

He stood quietly contemplating the lovers, until the reading ceased. He then gave a slight alarm! which caused Edward and Anne to start round. Poor Anne felt her own situation so acutely, that, for the moment, she could not meet the unexpected gaze of the old man, so did what was, under the embarrassing circumstances, perhaps the wisest thing she could do—namely, ran, and throwing her arms round his neck, hid her blushes in his bosom. Osborne himself felt a little confused—indeed, very much so, not alone because the old man had come upon them so unexpectedly, but because he scarcely knew how to commence what he had determined to say, and which he had said over and over again to himself admirably when alone; but now he could not conjure up a single word.

"Edward," said the old man, shaking his head at Osborne, while he still held the lovely Anne close to his heart, "is this well?—Is this the way in which you ever keep your promises?"

"I made no promises," replied Osborne; "I listened to all you said, but I listened silently; I would not promise, for you had told me that which would have robbed me of all power to keep such promise. If we have done wrong in laying open to each other our soul's most inward hopes, you, you alone should bear the blame; had you not divulged to me the love Anne bore me, I had died of anguish, rather than have spoken of my love to her."

"Be not angry with Edward, dear grandfather," said Anne, looking up in the old man's face so imploringly, that he felt constrained, in pity, to dispel the frown he had put on; and, kissing her forehead, murmured—"Poor child, poor child!"

"If any one be to blame," continued Anne, "'tis I—indeed it is."

"Of course it is," said the old man, slightly smiling; "I never yet

found maid who loved, but ever took all blame upon herself; such feeling is an ingredient in woman's nature, and you had been no true woman. Anne, without it. But I want not to find fault; I want to find out the reason for this sudden change. Speak, Edward, tell me how this has come to pass?"

"How can you ask?" replied Osborne. "It is self evident—I betrayed myself, in telling my love for her—you betrayed her, in telling her love for me; you cannot keep two hearts that love asunder; mutual love is like a taper lighted at both ends—however far apart the flames may be at first, they will creep on and on, till, meeting in the midst, blaze forth as one."

"Yes," replied the old man, "and then go out."

The look which Anne and Edward cast at each other upon hearing this, was one of intense affection, but certainly not at all complimentary, as regarded their opinion of the old man's wisdom.

"But what says my father," enquired Anne; "what have I to hope or fear?"

The old man shook his head, and said—"Before I relate what has passed in town, do you relate to me what has passed here; the longer I am silent, perhaps the happier for you."

Poor Anne's heart sunk within her, as she heard the words.

Osborne, seeing the sudden change, took her hand affectionately, but firmly in his own, as he said—"Dearest Anne, is this your promised firmness? We have argued on all that may chance amiss; we have determined to dare the storm—then shrink not, dear one, at the first slight shower." Then addressing the old man, he continued—"If I must speak first, this is our resolve—never to wed with any but each other; we have plighted our troth; we have broken this ring together," and he held up the half of a golden ring, "and now it were easier with a single breath to join again these broken halves, than for the breath of a thousand mortals e'er again to disunite our hearts." Saying this he completely enfolded the willing girl in his arms, and stood for several seconds almost frowning at the poor old man, as though he regarded him as an enemy come to tear her from him.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear!" said the old man, beating his hands against the sides of his own head; "this comes of leaving them—this all comes of leaving them together—how will it end, how *will* it end?"

"Well, depend on it, if you will befriend us," said Edward.

"I befriend you—I! how can I do so, knowing as I do the merchant's fixed resolve." The old man now related to them, that the merchant was thunderstruck at hearing of Anne's disinclination to become a countess, which at the death of the Earl of Shrewsbury, she would be if she married Lord Talbot; and he said that her father had completely changed; all his ambition was to make her great; for he said, "he should then be sure he had not been duped by some artful beggar, who would play the lover to get his gold." "I dare say I have done wrong," said the old man, "but I thought to serve you both; so I told the merchant Edward's love for you."

"And what said he?" enquired Edward, eagerly.

"Said!" replied the other, "he burst into a laugh, and then exclaimed

'love her! pooh, pooh, he loves her moneybags! What Edward, the cold, calculating, sober Edward, love any one? absurd! but he knows how rich I am to a fraction, and I suppose has been fooling it with a silly girl, who would believe what one man said as willingly as another. No, no, none shall wed with Anne, but he who loves her, and can put that love beyond a doubt by bringing more to her than she to him.' I then thought I might do something by working upon his fears, so hinted gently that if he took not greater care, I verily believed that you would wed without his consent at all."

"And to that, how did he reply?" exclaimed Osborne more anxiously than before.

"By another laugh," replied the old man; "and then he added, 'you know not Edward, but I do, and he knows me! Prove him, old man!' he said; 'place him at the altar with my willing girl, and fifty priests all willing to unite them—then let but Edward know he took her without my consent, and he'd refuse her at the altar's foot; for if he married thus, he would be sure the game from him was gone for ever, and that instead of wedding with rich Hewet's daughter, he had married with a beggar."

"Did he say that?" exclaimed Edward, drawing himself up proudly; "but thank Heaven he did, for now I have the opportunity to prove, at least to her, the real sincerity of my love. All I wish is to convince her that I love her for herself alone."

"But would that prove your love—bringing her to beggary?" said the old man.

"It would," said Anne, "if he were willing to receive a beggar's hand; but it shall prove more, for it shall show to the world that Anne Hewet would willingly become a beggar, to become his wife."

"You are mad, you are both, stark, staring mad, to talk thus," ejaculated the old man.

"No, grandfather, no," said Anne; "and would you not see us really mad, devise some plan to aid us."

"What plan can be better than the one I formed, dear Anne?" said Osborne.

"And what mighty plan was that?" enquired the old man.

"To tempt the pastor of the ruined chapel," said Edward, "to unite us privily; I am willing then to keep our marriage secret, and knowing she is irrevocably mine, to say farewell in the ruined aisle—to fly to London—accept the appointment in a foreign land—to labour night and day; and oh, how sweet that labour then would be, for when I had achieved an independence, then, and not till then, could I return to claim my heart's sole treasure. I have already, more than once, prayed of Anne to agree to this; I have spoken to the pastor, but, alas! he hesitates, for he cannot feel the bitter agonies of despairing love. You might do much with him; you might persuade him—tempt him with all I have of earthly value."

"And would you really," interrupted the old man, addressing Anne, "really be willing to forego all the bright prospects that are breaking to your view? But no, no, wait until to-morrow, your father will then be here, and——"

"To-morrow!" exclaimed both the lovers, in a tone of agony.

"Yes," replied the old man, "and with him, I believe, the young Lord Talbot."

"That name decides my fate," exclaimed Osborne; "we are one this day, I swear, or Edward Osborne never sees the dawn of another sun."

"Edward, Edward," exclaimed the agonized girl, rushing to him, "recall those words!"

"Foolish boy!" said the old man; "death is a simple thing to talk of in our youth, but wait till you are my age, and then you will think him far too quick in coming, without wishing to drag him forward with your own impious hand. But listen to me; I will promise *nothing*; but I will, to ease your excited minds, up to the ruins, see the pastor; but it must be on one condition—that whatever be my decision when I return, you will then abide by it."

Poor Osborne, and Anne too, had so wrought up their feelings, that they scarcely, at that moment, knew what they did or said; but fancying there was a sound of hope in the old man's words, they eagerly assented. The old man immediately left the cottage.

He had not been gone long, before they were surprised at hearing the voice of Flora, singing gaily along the garden. When she entered the parlour, she started at seeing Anne weeping bitterly, and reclining upon Edward's shoulder, his arm around her waist.

"Halloo! halloo! halloo!" said Flora, "Master Edward, do you know what you are doing? Oh, fie! oh, fie!"

"This is no moment for jesting, Flora," said Osborne. "But how is it you are here? Are you alone?" he ejaculated earnestly.

"Alone!" she replied, "to be sure I am. But what does all this crying and sobbing mean? do one of you speak. Here have I been sent on with a whole boat-load of things, and have come up for people to go down and bring them here; for I suppose you know that the merchant and our good dame, and Willy-of-the-Bridge, and Eoline, and somebody Mistress Anne will be *delighted* to see, are coming here to-morrow, and that somebody is young Lord Talbot; and I understand that we are to have a wedding—at least, so they say in London, and—Why, good gracious, Mistress Anne, you look as if you were fainting—what is the matter?" As Flora uttered these last words, her real kindness of heart shone forth.

Osborne, who believed that Flora sincerely loved her young mistress, now told her all that had passed, even to the present mission of the old man.

"And I'm glad of it," said Flora, "and I hope to heaven that nothing will happen to prevent so proper a scheme being carried out; I like people to marry those they love, or how can you expect them to love those they marry. I'll be after him," she continued, "and I'll bring back some good news, depend upon it; and if the pastor refuses to marry you, I'll do it myself: did not I always tell you you were cut out for each other, and it was not my fault that you kept your eyes shut so long. But cheer up your spirits 'till I come back—that's all, and you shall see—you shall see." Flora waited not for a reply, but hurried from the Cottage.

With what anxiety did Edward listen to every sound; at one moment

he fancied the old man was calling him, (and he hastened to the door—no one was there; and again he returned to the side of the weeping girl.

"Oh, Edward," said Anne, "I fear the old man was right; we are mad, we must be mad to expect that the good pastor will listen to our prayers. But surely the old man might have returned ere this! Hark, was not that his foot?"

They both listened, but no sound struck upon their ear. At least an hour had elapsed since the old man's departure, and still neither he, nor Flora, had returned; their anxiety had become almost insupportable, when, suddenly, the old man entered the room. He was greatly agitated.

"Why have you drawn me into this terrible perplexity?" he said. "I have done wrong, I know I have done wrong, but it is my love for that poor foolish girl, that blinds me to the path I should pursue. Heaven grant that I may not repent this day's work! Ask me no questions; the end is all you need at present, know—the pastor has consented."

"Bless him! bless him!" exclaimed Anne, as she flung herself upon the old man's neck; "and bless you, dear grandfather, for you alone could have worked this miracle."

Osborne scarcely knew whether he was awake or dreaming.

"Now," said the old man, "your own fates are in your own hands; once more I pray of you—I beseech of you to reflect, while yet there is time. In a worldly point of view, this marriage will bring ruin on you both; remember, Edward, from the merchant you have no hope; the moment you are married you are to leave the country, and never to divulge this secret union, until you can come and claim your bride with ample independence."

"I know all," said Edward; "and if but Anne consent to forego all for me, can you believe me so contemptible as to hesitate one moment in foregoing all for her?"

"Well then," sighed the old man, "fate must work its way. Retire, children, to your separate rooms, and in holy meditation prepare your minds for the awful step you are about to take; in one hour all will be prepared."

The lovers did as the old man desired. What passed in the minds of Osborne and Anne, when left to cool reflection, it would be difficult to describe. Notwithstanding all their fears that what they were about to do thus clandestinely was wrong, yet love ever holds up a medium of such a rosy tint, that all a lover sees through it, bears its own sweet hue. Whatever reflections came of a painful nature, they were easily dispelled by calling up the vision of the one beloved object. There cannot be a doubt but that love is a madness; it is therefore useless to judge of it by the cold calculating rules of wisdom. By the time the hour had elapsed, their minds had become so much at ease, that they both met the old man with countenances thoughtful, it is true, but smiling; and they could not help feeling cheered by finding a slight smile also upon the old man's face.

"Come," he said, "my children, I will not check the little happiness that your trembling hearts might feel, upon this most eventful day of

your whole lives, by seeming sad; come then, my children, come to the ruined chapel."

In another minute and they were on their road to happiness or misery for life.

They had not been gone but scarcely a short half-hour, when along the road leading from London, a rather extensive cavalcade might be seen approaching, which, had the lovers beheld, would have cast them into hopeless despair. It was the merchant and his party, all but Lord Talbot! The effect this unlooked-for arrival had upon the fates of our hero and heroine, we must leave to a future chapter to disclose.

CHAPTER XXXV.

For which his horse for fear 'gan to turn,
And leap'd aside, and founder'd as he leapt;
And ere that Arcite may take any keep,
He pigh't him on the pommel of his head,
That in the place he lay as he were dead.
His breast to-bursten with his saddle-bow,
As black he lay as any coal or crow,
So was his blood runnen in his face.

CHAUCER.

Horton's case of mind, caused by the discovery of the dead bodies of two of those, whom he had long since regarded as his bitterest foes, was not of long continuance, for just as he had left the city by the Postern-gate, for the death of Spikely had changed his plans of going to Gravesend, he happened to pass by a carpenter's yard, in which two workmen were grinding their tools, and talking very loudly.

"It always was so, and it always will be so," said the carpenter who was turning the stone, "blood will have blood, and murder will out: I was one of those who brought the murdered knight out of the wood."

As these words struck upon Horton's ear he started, though he scarcely would confess to himself the reason why.

"It's some years now," said the man, "since that happened, but I remember it as well as if it were yesterday: we carried him to merchant Hewet's on the Bridge. It was the merchant that found the knight."

Horton no longer doubted the subject upon which the carpenter was dilating, and felt as if spell-bound to the spot; he longed to hear more, yet dreaded what might follow.—"But why should I?" he said inwardly, "they know not me; and if aught of danger has transpired, the sooner I gain the knowledge, the sooner may such danger be averted."

"At this moment, the carpenter who had been holding the tools was called away; and Horton, as an excuse for entering into conversation with the man, who was now standing listlessly against the stone, drew out the broken knife, and said—"Come, my good fellow, give me a turn or two, will you? and I will give you a flagon of ale. I have broken the point off my knife here."

"Oh, right willingly, master," replied the man, "and I'll drink you a long life and a happy."

The man began to turn the stone. Horton placed the dagger-knife upon it, and as many a man figuratively has done before, was unconsciously sharpening a weapon to pierce his own side with.

"Were you not talking about some strange murder?" said Horton, in a careless tone.

"Ay, marry was I," replied the man, "of a murder that mayhap you may remember, the murder of Sir Filbut Fussy many years ago?"

"No," said Horton, "I remember nothing of it—curse the knife!" he exclaimed, "I've cut my hand."

The cut not being of much consequence, he resumed his labour, as the man went on to relate all the circumstances of the assassination; to these Horton was compelled to listen, having, as he had done, told the man he remembered nothing of them—"Yes," said the man, "there were no less than five stabs, that had been done with a knife, it was supposed, just of that sort."

Horton's eye fell upon the blade, and there he beheld the stains, which at that moment to his imagination, looked like so many bleeding tongues, that called out murder!

"That will do," he said, quickly hiding the knife from his own sight, by placing it in his girdle: "but why did you say, as I think I heard you, that murder would out?"

"Oh," said the man, "because murder always does, and so has this—at least it's pretty sure to do. We have had the officers here, not ten minutes before you came, to tell me that I shall be wanted again to give evidence; for it seems that it is almost certain now, from some secret information lately received, that the murderer was one of Hewet's apprentices, a worthless scoundrel called Harry Horton; he has bolted, so they say, but they're after him, and I hope yet to see him hanged."

Horton frowned, and flinging down the money he had promised, hurried away. "He has betrayed me then," he exclaimed, "and his death will bring no safety. I must fly this kingdom for ever; but whither shall I go? Could I but pass the borders, in Scotland I were safe, and yet might with my sword, cut out a better fortune than seems to beset me here." He took out a leather purse, and began to count his money. "I have scarcely enough to buy a horse, and keep me too, until I have crossed the border; well, I must trudge it a foot, until chance shall allow me to beg, borrow, or steal a nag."

In order to help him on his way, he drew forth the knife, and going to a hedge close by, cut a strong cudgel of a good ell in length, and as he tramped along, he trimmed off the rough knots; while thus employed he became lost in thought, and unconscious of whither he was strolling. From his reverie he was suddenly aroused by hearing a loud voice bawling out, "Why don't you look where you're going—you'll have your brains kicked out."

Horton, raising his eyes, now found that he was in Smithfield, close to a horse that was backing towards him; the man before the horse's head was pulling at the bridle, but the horse dragged him along. It

being market-day, there was a crowd standing by, but all appeared afraid of approaching too near.

"Damn him!" said the man; "I wish a knife was in him."

Horton, as he sprung aside, gave the animal a sharp blow with his hedge-stick, which made the horse plunge forward, and then to kick as if he had been mad."

"You seem to have an awkward customer there, friend," said Horton, addressing the man; "he has evidently more blood in his veins than flesh on his bones; and has more of the devil than the dove about him."

"Hang me," said the man, "if I don't think he is the devil himself, or some witch in the shape of a horse."

"He can't be a witch, Master Giles," observed one of the bystanders, "for you see he's got a tail, though it's a rum'un, and that's a part of an animal, bird, or fish, that witches can't come at—not any how: I suppose that's why so many witches appear like old women, for old women, having no tails, do you see, it's plaguy difficult to find out which is a witch, and which isn't."

Whether the horse took any interest in this conversation, we know not; but he certainly became, suddenly, very quiet, and allowed the bridle to be put properly over his head.

"There are many good points about him," observed Horton, looking at the animal with the eye of a profound judge of horseflesh. "and when he was young, must have been a smartly fast; would you sell him?"

"Sell him!" exclaimed the man, "would I not, if I could find a fool great enough to buy him; but he's too well known in Smithfield to find a customer here! We can only use him to draw timber, and he won't do that but when he likes."

"Well," said Horton, "I have never yet seen a horse that could conquer me; put on a saddle; and old as he is, and vicious as he seems to be, I may perhaps be a customer, if your charge be monstrous low."

"There's no difficulty in putting a saddle on him," replied the man; "but putting yourself on him is quite another thing."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Horton; "if we are to buy and sell, we must do so quickly, for I have no time to spare."

"You'll take all blame to yourself," said the man, as he was saddling the horse; "and if he gives you an awkward kick when you try to mount him, don't blame me: and I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll bet you a silver groat that you don't get on at all; and I'll bet you another silver groat, that if you do, you're off again before you can say Billy-the-bird-catcher."

"Done," said Horton, who, always vain of his horsemanship, now felt proud, fancying he had an opportunity of shewing off his skill in equitation. Horton's first care was to examine the girths, then the stirrup leathers, and last of all, the bridle; the whole seeming sound and firm, the time to mount had arrived.

"You had better pay the two groats, and give up the trial," said the man, "for I tell you he'll kick your inside out before he'll let you back him."

"That's may affair," replied Horton; "I'll tame the brute, or kill

nim, or he shall kill me; depend on this, no horse shall ever conquer me."

The people by could not imagine what Horton was about, when they saw him climb a cresset-post; there was a projection about four or five feet up the post; upon this he placed one of his feet, and holding by the upper part swung outwards; then extending his legs, he told the man to lead the horse quietly past the post; the man understood his manœuvre, and nodding to Horton, did as he was desired; the moment the horse was exactly beneath Horton, he dropped upon the saddle; the animal for a moment seemed taken by surprise, and trembled all over; this moment was enough for his rider to succeed in placing his feet firmly in the stirrups.

"The first groat is mine!" exclaimed Horton triumphantly, and the bystanders set up a shout of laughter; this seemed to awake the horse, for instantly he began to rear, and plunge, and then to kick violently; but Horton still kept his seat; and laughing, cried out—"Billy-the-bird-catcher; there goes your other groat."

This caused another shout of laughter. The horse now took to a new manœuvre to dismount his rider, and that was by swiftly turning round and round as on a pivot; but finding this avail him nothing, he once more took to rearing, which he now did to such a frightful extent, that at every instant, it was feared he would fall backwards and crush his rider beneath him.

Of this Horton himself now began to have some fear; so raising his heavy stick, he gave the horse a violent blow between the ears, which made him drop as though he had been shot. As he fell, Horton managed to alight with his own feet upon the ground, still striding across the animal. Now a general cry was raised for Horton to escape. "Get off, get off!" exclaimed at least fifty voices at once.

"No, no," said Horton, "if once I'm off, he'll never let me get on again; I must be master now or never."

Such determination as that of Horton's, and his apparent knowledge of horsemanship, raised him wonderfully in the estimation of the crowd around. Horton observed their admiration, and by it his vanity was excited to the highest pitch. Presently the horse began to move, and then to snort violently, and shake his head.

"I have conquered him!" exclaimed Horton, "and now, with me, he'll be a lamb."

In this the rider was at fault, for he had scarcely said the words, ere the horse was again upon his feet; for a time he seemed drunk or groggy, but with all his vice still unsubdued; he champed at his bit, and at last getting it in his teeth, darted off wildly mad; still Horton was on his back, and seemed as though he had grown to his seat. On flew the horse defying all power of rein.

Horton exerted every nerve to pull him in; all was useless; still on flew the horse. Just as he had entered the last street leading into the open roads, the reins gave way, and by the sudden jerk Horton was flung from the saddle. A violent cry of horror was raised by all who saw the fall, for one of Horton's feet had slipped through the stirrup, and he was now being dragged bleeding on the ground; yet still the horse flew on. Horton's shrieks seemed to add new fears to the wild

The Death



and maddened brute, whose speed now rendered all thoughts of pursuit hopeless. Horton, whose senses were not yet quite gone, made violent efforts to release his foot, but all were unavailing, and on, and on, flew the horse. The poor wretch's clothes were torn to shreds, and blood and flesh now began to mark the road as the infuriated animal past along. The horse at last began to slacken his pace from sheer exhaustion, but still went on; Horton's now lifeless body, had become a shapeless mass of torn and bloody flesh.

A close wood was lying before the phrenzied horse; towards this he flew with vigour, once again renewed, as if anxious to reach it, that he might there die away from the sight of man; again more slow, and now tottering, became his pace; but on, and on, he still dragged his gory victim. The wood was close and dark, but at the further end of the road appeared an open space where all was light; he had nearly reached this outlet, when exhausted nature suddenly gave way, and falling heavily upon the earth, was dead.

Although the horse had soon outstripped his horror-stricken pursuers, they found no difficulty in tracking his course; awful traces of Horton's dreadful fate were too clear and many, to leave a doubt as to the road on which he had been dragged. When the pursuers reached the wood, it was found that the horse had fallen dead exactly upon the spot where Horton had stabbed the young knight; and it seemed as though the hand of avenging fate had directed the way the horse should go, thus to render the poor unconscious animal the executor of justice upon his master's murderer; for it so happened that the old horse was the very same restive creature upon which the knight had ridden with Alyce, as they journeyed from Old London Bridge to Westminster. But even beyond this the hand of retribution seemed to have been at work, for the knife, the very one with which Horton had assassinated Sir Filbut, and which he himself had so recently sharpened, was now found with the blade deeply embedded in his heart, driven there by the violent dashing of the body upon the earth.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

My lady and my love, and wife so dear,
I put me in your wise governance;
Chooseth yourself which may be most plesance
And most honour to you and me also;
I do no force the whether of the two,
For as you liketh it sufficeth me.

CHAUCER.

WHETHER it was the sun of joy that lighted up their hearts, and thence sent forth its rays to illumine whatever came within their sight, it is not easy to determine; but this is certain, that as young Osborne, with the lovely Anne, stepped lightly on their way towards the ruins of the chapel, all nature, at least to them, seemed to smile around; the sky appeared suddenly to have become much brighter, the air much softer, and

to breathe with a warmer glow: the early spring flowers were timidly peeping forth, from spots well sheltered from the northern winds, and now were courting the kisses of the genial southern breeze.

"How sweet and soft the air!" said Anne.

"Not half so sweet and soft as thy sweet sighs," replied Osborne.

"And how clear and bright the blue that overspreads the skies," said the lovely girl.

"Not half so clear and bright as the blue of thy dear eyes!" observed Edward.

Anne looked up at her lover in astonishment, so unexpected were such expressions from the lips of Osborne; but she thanked him for his flattery, by a kinder pressure of his arm, and then they went on again in silence.

The wings which love had given to their feet, were terribly weighed down by the old man's unusually slow steps, and ever and anon he stopped, and turning, looked back towards the Cottage. He did this so often, that it at last attracted the lovers' notice, and a sudden fear seized upon them.

"Why do you look so anxiously behind, dear grandfather?" said Anne; "surely there is no danger of pursuit?"

"Who should pursue us, Anne?" observed Osborne. "Who is there who knows of our intent?"

They were now completely out of sight of the Cottage, and the ruined chapel stood picturesquely out at no great distance. The old man endeavoured to mend his pace; but still there was a heaviness in his every step.

"Light hearts and light heels," observed the old man, "usually run well together; but age and youth are ill-matched competitors in any race. The chapel to you is the haven of your hopes—to me, it only speaks of death. But I promised not to cast a shadow o'er your bliss; so on, children, on, and the old man will not be far behind."

The lovers now insisted upon his walking between them, and resting upon their arms; and in this way they reached the chapel.

When they descended into the old crypt, they found the assistant there, but the pastor was absent. This crypt was very ancient, and had doubtless belonged to a building of much greater magnitude than that of the ruined chapel above. There were several ancient tombs, the inscriptions of which were completely obliterated by the hand of time. A single lamp hung from the roof, which lighted but a very scanty space around; the rest was all in gloom, and indeed many parts were in total darkness. They seated themselves on an old stone seat, and then a long deathlike silence ensued.

After a time, the old man rose, and went to the assistant, who was attentively reading from an iron-bound massive Bible, and whispered something into his ear; the man immediately quitted his seat, and retired, and then another lengthened silence ensued; but still the pastor made not his appearance. Osborne's anxiety was becoming unendurable; he feared, yet knew not what he feared. Anne too seemed sad, and heaved many an involuntary sigh; suddenly they both started at hearing a female voice. It was the voice of Flora. For the time, they had



The carriage

completely forgotten that she had said she would follow the old man to the chapel. Her presence seemed to reassure them, for she ever looked at the bright side of all things.

Not long after Flora's appearance, the good pastor arrived, and with him several of his flock, principally country labourers, and a few substantial-looking farmers, and then commenced a short service. When this was ended, some of the little congregation left the place, and some few still remained to witness the marriage; but they all stood at a distance, and were completely lost in the gloomy recesses. The pastor commenced, by offering up a very devout prayer for a blessing upon the work he was about to perform, and after this the marriage ceremony commenced. Anne felt her heart beating violently at every succeeding sentence. The only persons that came within the range of the lamp's feeble rays, were the pastor, the assistant, the kneeling lovers, Flora, who stood on one side, and the old man, who rested against a tomb in the rear. Osborne and the lovely Anne never raised their eyes for a moment from the earth; so strange, so unaccountable seemed their positions, that they felt bewildered—lost. The only time when Osborne for a moment regained his confidence, and his voice no longer trembled, was as he uttered the vow to love and cherish her he was then making his own for ever. It had, of course, been settled that the old man was to act as the father to give away the bride; they fancied they heard him weep, as the footsteps unsteadily advanced, when the moment had arrived to place the hand of Anne in that of Edward. It was a moment of real pain to Anne, for the thought flew through her heart, of "why was not her own father there to perform the act." She felt the hand that took hers tremble as violently as her own; but when hers was placed in that of Osborne, the pressure of true affection he bestowed upon it, acted like a spell, to banish from her soul all thoughts but one, and that thought was—he is my husband!

The moment the ceremony was finished, the few of the congregation who had remained, hurried away to their various avocations; but the pastor kept the young pair some time longer, listening to an exhortation and holy lecture for their governance in their future altered state of being.

When they arose from their kneeling position, Flora went up to Edward, and whispered rather loudly—"You ought to kiss her."

Osborne started, and was rather confused at hearing such a speech; but, supposing Flora knew much better than he did, he saluted his beloved Anne, and ever after declared, that "that kiss was the sweetest he had ever had, always *excepting* the last."

As they returned to the cottage, Flora would not allow them to be sad, at least she endeavoured to prevent them, by continually addressing Anne as "Dame Osborne;" and said, "she was perfectly astonished to see how much older she looked since she had become a married woman."

She would have succeeded to a degree in cheering them; but the old man, at once reminding them of their sacred pledge to part as soon as wedded, now seemed like a dagger thrust into their very hearts. "It is for her sake more than your own," said the old man; "do not, by breaking your word with me, cast her from splendid affluence to abject

poverty : until the sun has fairly set you may remain, but then your promise must be fulfilled."

"It shall," exclaimed Osborne, "though its fulfilment should break my heart ; but my heart will not break, for in my exile the thought that she is mine, will render that heart still firmer to endure, still prouder to achieve. I have something now to live for, something to labour for, something to die for, if needs must be. Oh, my own sweet, dear, dear, Anne! the world cannot now exile me from you as long as this heart shall beat, for in it you are so firmly set, that nought but death can ever again tear you from it. All I ask, is, do not weep when I shall say farewell ; but cheer our parting with a smile, dear girl ; 'tis easier to fly from smiles than tears."

Anne did attempt a smile ; but a tear would steal forth to dim its brightness.—"There are many hours yet, before the sun shall set, that we shall be together ; and in those hours we must arrange our plans ; and——"

Just as he had proceeded thus far, they arrived at the cottage-gate. When they entered the sitting-room, Osborne and Anne had nearly fallen to the ground, so completely taken off their guard were they at finding the merchant, Alyce, and the whole party there. This seemed the deadliest blow that could have fallen upon Edward's heart. And should he be compelled to separate from his beloved Anne—his now true wife—and without a word, scarcely a look?

"Why, boy and girl," said the merchant, "what ails you?"

Anne ran to her mother, and throwing her arms around her neck, began to weep.

"Why, Edward," continued the merchant, "you look as deadly pale as though you had just committed murder, or matrimony ; and the one, in certain cases, is little less a crime than the other. I bring you good news, boy—take that," saying which, he placed a sealed packet in Edward's hand ; "there are your credentials ; I have settled everything, I am sure, to your satisfaction. But you must start this very night ; the best of all my ships will sail with you early in the morning, and then I have done all a master can be expected to do for his apprentice ; after that, you must look to yourself for happiness and fortune. There now, no thanks ; and whilst the repast is being prepared—and, egad, I hope it will not take long, for our ride has made me as hungry as a wolf—do you and Anne go take a stroll, and bid each other good bye, for your stay abroad will perhaps be a lengthy one."

These but few words seemed to remove a mountain off Edward's breast : he would still have a few moments alone with Anne, when they could arrange how they might hear from each other. When they were alone together, they could no longer blind themselves to the misery of their position. At one moment Anne would have braved all, rather than endure the pain of parting ; but the next she shuddered at the thought of the storm, that would surely follow such a revelation.

Over all the vows, the sighs, the prayers, the promises, the oaths they mutually breathed from their inmost hearts, we must draw a veil ; such secrets are too sacred to be lightly dealt with. When their allotted time

had elapsed, they had so far subdued their feelings, as at least to appear composed.

During the whole of the repast, the merchant would keep joking, and was more than usually merry. He certainly did not mention Lord Talbot by name; but it was easy for Edward to guess the party meant, when Hewet, laughing, told the company, that before Osborne should return from abroad, he hoped to have a right worthy son-in-law—one that he might be proud of—"So, Edward, boy, look at your sister well, for you will never again see her unmarried."

Both Osborne and Anne could not help feeling how true was that speech, but that how little did the speaker know wherein its truthfulness might lie.

The Cripple too was wondrous jocular; but he could now afford to be right merry, for he was rich in all that could bring happiness to man; and the Bridge-shooter with Flora were as wild and foolish as playful kittens.

All this mirth made poor Osborne and his sweet Anne more and more sad; but this was natural, for Edward was that day to leave all that he had hitherto regarded as his kindred and his home. When the moment had really arrived, Anne could no longer restrain her tears; but the merchant only laughed at her for her weakness, and told her that she ought to be delighted, for her brother was entering upon the road to fortune and to happiness. Edward could not trust himself to say "farewell!" to any one; but biting his lips, as if he thought that would keep down his swelling heart, he seized his cap—his hand was on the fastening of the door—he cast one look back upon Anne, and was about to rush forth, when he was called back by the merchant.

"Why, boy," exclaimed the merchant, "you have forgotten the most important thing of all!"

Osborne turned, and there he saw the sealed packet—"I had indeed," he said; and then once more approached the door.

"Well," again exclaimed the merchant, "you will forget your head next, I imagine: now, is there nothing else you have to take?"

"Nothing that I can remember," replied Osborne, now scarcely able to support himself.

"Is money nothing?" said the merchant; "or do you think you can travel half round the world without it? There is a well-stocked purse—take it, and what more you require, when in a foreign land, my agents will supply."

Edward felt almost as much pain at finding how willingly all but one could see him depart, as he did at parting with all he now wished to live for; but he was determined to suppress his feelings until he might give vent to them in secret. Once more his hand was on the door, and once more, as if to torture him still further, the merchant exclaimed—"Why, the boy will drive one mad with his forgetfulness; the most particular thing of all he has again forgotten."

"What have I now forgotten, master?" said Edward, in an imploring tone; "what have I still forgotten?"

"What have you still forgotten?" replied the merchant, imitating

Edward's tone of voice, "why, that which few men are ever allowed to forget, if once they have possessed it; you have forgotten — your wife!"

"In Heaven's name what mean you?" exclaimed Edward Osborne, his eyes staring with astonishment.

Anne clung trembling to her mother, and became ashy pale.

"What mean I?" replied the merchant. "Master Hewet is one of those who generally means exactly what he says. Come hither, and if you can do so, deny what I have said. Have you, or have you not, a wife?"

"I have," replied Edward.

"And that wife was my child," said Hewet. "Now, mark me, Edward; what you have done, you have done not blindly; you knew my thoughts upon the subject of that child's future destiny, as clearly as I did myself; I have often, and often told you, that were she ever to wed without my full knowledge and consent, that from that hour she was no longer a child of mine." Again Anne clung more closely to her mother. "Do you remember hearing me utter that determination?"

"I do," replied Osborne, who, now all hope seemed past, felt a powerful return of his self-possession; "I do remember it, for you feared, you said, that your fortune, not your daughter's love, would be the aim of him who wedded her. It was that very knowledge which first inspired me with hope, for I felt——"

"How little I care for what you felt," observed the merchant, "you will discover when you read the contents of the packet you now hold. Break the seals at once, for it were better that you know the worst at once, for my determination is irrevocable."

All the time Osborne with trembling hands was opening the packet, poor Anne fixed her eyes kindly upon him; he caught her glance, and his breast heaved with joy, for in that glance he read, that come what evil fate there might, there was still one kind heart left that would ever beat with love for him. He tore open the packet, and upon reading but a single line, became more bewildered than ever.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, turning his imploring gaze upon his master, "speak to me, and tell me, am I in a dream, or is all that I see and hear, and feel, reality?"

"If the boy is too great a dunce," observed Hewet, "to read such a plain document as that, do you, Willy-of-the-Bridge, read it for him."

The Cripple took the parchment, when the whole mystery was soon made clear; it was a deed of partnership between William Hewet and Edward Osborne, in every way completed but the signatures.

"And have I forfeited all this goodness," exclaimed Osborne, "by my mistaken hope of proving my disinterested love for her?"

"You would have done so," replied the merchant, "had you married her without my knowledge and consent; but know, to your astonishment, that the hand which placed her hand in yours, was that of her father. You were both too deeply absorbed to perceive, that instead of our old friend there approaching the altar, that it was her father who took his place. It was I, her father, who willingly gave her to you; it is I, her father, who now open my arms to receive a son!"

As Osborne flew into the extended arms of the merchant, Flora

blubbered aloud ; the Bridge-shooter made a monstrous wry face ; and, indeed, there was no lack of tears, to moisten the eyes of any present ; but they were soon changed into smiles, when the merchant explained that the whole had been a plan of his own to unite his daughter to Edward.

"From the moment," said Hewet, "that you, Edward, dashed fearlessly into the flood to save that child's life, I prayed to Heaven that that life you had so bravely saved, might one day prove a blessing to you. All that I have ever told you, about my fear of her wedding with one who saw her virtues in her wealth, was true ; and it was to put the purity of your love to the proof, that all has happened as it really has."

"Now," said the old man, "perhaps you can guess why I loitered so upon the road, and why so much delay occurred in the chapel ; the fact is, the merchant was behind his time, or rather you before yours."

"Yes," said Flora, "and but for my haste in flying back, to apprize the merchant at the Ferry, and bring him on at once, perhaps you would not have been married at all ; but as it is, why, you may now enjoy

"The Dream of Love, the sweetest dream,
That ever haunts the midnight hour."

But I must say no more, for I see the bashful poet is blushing already."

Never were such happy faces seen, as those that now smiled upon one another. In the evening the ceremony of signing the deed of partnership took place, and every one present witnessed it ; when it came to the Bridge-shooter, he gave a prodigious flourish.—"Ah," said he, "I did that, just to show Flora what a flourishing young man I am." Even the sweet and gentle Eoline made a mark upon the deed, and then kissing the newly-made bride, placed upon her neck a golden chain, to which was attached the diamond ornament so frequently mentioned before. It originally belonged to a youth, the first, and only love of the Abbess, who had given it to her : it had been stolen by Nan's sister, and had passed from her through a Jew, to old Sir Filbut Fussy ; from him it descended to the young knight ; the Abbess had recovered it through Spikely's confession when he thought he was dying. In the wreck it was believed to have been lost ; but by a most strange chance, Eoline remained, though unknowingly, the bearer of it to the Heath ; it had become entangled in the folds of her dress, and had remained there until the night, when it was discovered by Flora and William, amongst the wood ashes on the hearth. As Eoline had passed the fire on her retiring that evening, it had slipped into the smouldering embers.

The sight of it had a strange effect upon Alyce, for it brought back to her remembrance all the horrors she had endured in her madness. The merchant gazed at her with intense anxiety as she looked upon the bauble ; observing this, she turned upon him one of her sweetest smiles, and said — "Be not alarmed for me, my dear, it has no power over me now."

In a few days, and Osborne was on his way to a foreign shore, but not as he so lately dreaded he should be, for now he was sailing as a princely merchant, in one of their own ships, and with him his adored wife and Flora. They were to be away for a long time ; and while they are on their tour, we will pause awhile, ere we say farewell to our gentle readers.

It is perhaps in life, as it generally is in books, that when once marriage takes place, the *romance* is at an end ; but with regard to Osborne and Anne, in losing the romance of love, they found its reality.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

The fruit of every tale is for to say
 They eat, and drink, and dance, and sing, and play.
 —CHAUCER.



IN the time of Edward the Sixth, there stood an old house at the end of Chancery Lane, of which the above engraving is an exact representation. This house may be taken as a fair sample of the general style of London buildings, three hundred years ago, and it was from this house Dame Spikely was conducted by Horton, when she went to give evidence in the Law Court of Westminster. It was soon destined, however, to become the home of a very different character, for it had lately been purchased by Master Hewet for the purpose of carrying out one of his long-premeditated plans. But of that anon.

So very long had Edward, with Anne and Flora, been abroad, that ere they returned to Old England again, wonderful changes had taken place. Old London Bridge had been restored to its former magnificence, and the Golden Fleece was now one of the most superb houses upon it; but perhaps the greatest change of all, was to hear the Bridge-shooter's altered tone of voice, as he proudly addressed his master as—"My lord, and Alyce as my lady." By this it may be guessed, that Master Hewet was now LORD MAYOR OF LONDON; and what was quite as wonderful in William's own estimation, was to find himself elevated to the dignity of master of the Lord Mayor's barge. Never before had coat and badge been worn with greater pride, than it then was by the Bridge-shooter, when he attended his master upon state occasions. How often had he, when a poor ragged boy at the Old Swan Stairs, looked with an envying eye upon the Lord Mayor's bargemen, as they rowed proudly past, and now to find himself, not a mere bargeman, but the very head of them all, was a circumstance more like a dream to him than plain reality. Perhaps the proudest day of his whole bargeman's life, which by-the-by only lasted a year, was when he attended the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress as far as Greenwich, to receive on board their splendid boat the Lord Mayor's daughter, with her husband, and his own dear Flora, when they returned from the continent. Flora, as she stood watching the approaching barge, could not imagine what William meant by holding up his right hand as high as he possibly could; it seemed as if he were snapping his thumb and finger at her; but this she felt convinced could not be the case. The moment they had descended from the ship into the barge, the mystery was solved at once, for between the finger and thumb, which William kept saucily shaking close to the pretty little nose of Flora, there she saw a wedding-ring.

"Oh, I shall faint, I shall faint, I know I shall!" she exclaimed, as she pretended to fall fainting into the arms of her delighted lover. "I remember my fatal promise—I am lost!"

"Yes, and I've just found you," replied William, "and remember the finder is now to be handsomely rewarded for his trouble."

After the first burst of joy at the meeting had subsided, the merchant began to inform Osborne of the plans he had been arranging for their future modes of life. "Yes," he said, "the house on the Bridge has been rebuilt, and furnished with all the luxuries that the four quarters of the globe can bestow, and there you and Anne will live; for upon you will now devolve all the labours of our trade. I and Alyce shall remain in the house we now inhabit, and William is to ——"

Here the merchant was interrupted by Flora entering the saloon of the barge, in a violent fit of laughter. She was followed by William, who was evidently annoyed about something; but the more he appeared so, the more did Flora laugh, and insisted upon telling them the cause.

"Now, Flora, it's too bad—it is, upon my life!" said William. "But never mind, *you* are master now, but I shall be after Christmas."

This made Flora laugh still louder.

"But what can have made the girl so mad?" enquired Alyce.

"Why, when I found," said Flora, "that the merchant—I mean *his lordship*—had determined that marry William I must, why, I con-

sented; and as I wished him not to look quite so silly as some people do when they are being married, by not knowing what they are to say or do, I made him begin to practise. 'Now, William,' said I, 'you will have to say—I, William so and so —'

"By-the-by," interrupted Edward, "it never struck me before; but I really believe that not one person here ever heard his other name; for he has always been called either Billy, or William, or the Bridge-shooter. So tell us, William, what is your name?"

At this, William blushed up to his eyes, and Flora began again to laugh.

"I asked him the same question; and what do you think was his reply? He said—'he didn't know his own name, but he'd go and ask his mother.'"

This caused a general laugh, at the Bridge-shooter's expense. They were now very near the Bridge; so he seized upon this circumstance as an excuse for leaving them in their mirth. He now took the guidance of the boat into his own hands. When they were almost close upon the Bridge, he gave a signal. Every oar was in an instant shipped, and in another moment the barge shot gallantly down the fall. The oars, like a flash of light, once again were in the flood; and in five minutes more they had all landed at Old Swan Stairs.

It had been settled that William and Flora should be married on the day before Christmas-day, so that a tight-merry wedding it was sure to be; for the Christmas merrymakings in the olden time may be said to have been quite serious affairs. The Christmas holidays had already commenced, and this being the case, mirth and jollity reigned from one end of the kingdom to the other. Every street had its singers of Christmas carols. Plays and masquerades were not only going on in private houses, but even in the churches. A Lord of Misrule became the commanding genius in the larger mansions; and in others a like personage took the title of King of the Bean. All the houses were hung within and without with ivy and holly, and people danced around standards decked with evergreen, in the main roadways. One of the principal dishes at the Christmas board, was a huge boar's head: this was always introduced with great pomp and ceremony—loud flourishes of trumpets, or other musical instruments, announced its approach. Even prohibited games were allowed at this season, and indeed all the world, for a time, seemed turned upside down. Clowns dressed themselves out as bishops and judges; and judges and bishops became clowns, or acted the fool in various ways. The Bridge-shooter had drawn the prize to become the "King of the Bean," and how he obtained this dignified station, we can in a few words explain.

Flora had made a splendid cake, in which one bean was baked. All Hewet's household-retainers, workmen, weavers, throwsters, and all, were partakers of his hospitality; and when the proper time was come, the cake was broken into pieces, and whoever gained the piece containing the bean, was lord over all for a stated time. The Bridge-shooter had gained it, and bravely did he lord it, particularly over Flora.

When he returned from having asked his mother what his name was,



The Blue Tea

he told Flora, that there never was a name so cut out for a waterman as his, for it was Flood—"And uncommon well it looks over the door."

"Over what door?" inquired Flora.

"What door!" replied William; "why, over our own door, to be sure, in front of *our* house, at the end of Chancery Lane."

"Why, William," said Flora, "you must be mad to talk this nonsense!"

"If it is nonsense, it's uncommon pleasant nonsense; and you only come and see it," said the Bridge-shooter; and as he would take no denial, Flora and he strolled towards Chancery Lane.

When they arrived there, it was all quite true; for there she saw, on a board, over the door, "William Flood, Clothseller."

William now made her heart jump with joy, for he told her, that the merchant had given that house to his wife, and his wife was going to give it to Flora, as a wedding-present; and that the merchant was stocking the place with all sorts of clothier's goods, and was going to set William up as a retail dealer.—"Do you see that window up there?" said he, pointing to an upper casement. "That's to be our nursery—it will hold a quantity of little beds."

"William, William!" said Flora; "I must beg of you not to talk about such things to me—until after to-morrow."

When the morrow did come, the bells were set ringing merrily. The expected marriage of the Bridge-shooter had made a great noise in and about the neighbourhood of Philip Lane, and also amongst the inhabitants on Old London Bridge; so that, when he and Flora went to the church, they were attended by an enormous crowd of persons, all declaring they were intimate friends of the bride or bridegroom. Amongst these, of course, were the four inseparables, Catchemayde, Checklocke, Silkworm, and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker.

Luckily, the mansion of the merchant Hewet was an immense building, and the great hall in which the Christmas-eve revelries were to take place, was of a prodigious size. It was profusely decorated with ivy and holly, and lighted by nearly a thousand tapers. A large gallery was crowded with musicians, who filled the air with sweetest, and merriest strains.

The moment William and his pretty bride entered beneath the roof, they were seized by his bargemen, and straightway placed, side by side, upon the Yule-log, which had been kept near the door on purpose. Then a shout was raised, both within and without the house. Some of the bargemen acted the part of horses, to drag the Yule-log along, while the rest marched at the side, as a guard of honour.

In this way did worthy Master William Flood and his smiling dame enter the presence of the Lord Mayor of London and his beloved Alyce. Behind them stood Edward and Anne; and by Hewet's side sat the old man of the show.

Checklocke and Silkworm, with the little arrow-maker, all three arm-in-arm, were the noisiest of the noisy. Poor Catchemayde had been caught by his wife, and taken home like a naughty boy.

Presently, a poor, shabby, unfortunate, poverty-stricken being, stood forward, and made most horrible faces, which he intended to be comic.

Anne looked at the man with much interest, for she imagined she had seen some one of the kind before.

The man very humbly begged, of his Lordship to be allowed to amuse the company.

"Amuse the company!" said Hewet; "why, what can such an unhappy-looking being as you do to amuse?"

"Oh," said the man, making another grimace at the Lord Mayor, and at the same moment knocking off his own hat, and slipping on a wig, that old age had made more than half bald, "I can sing you a song, called Diddle'em Downy!"

Anne was no longer in doubt about whom she was looking upon; and whispering something to her father, she advanced to poor Downy, and placing a purse in his hand, said—"Take that—it comes from an old acquaintance."

The poor fellow appeared thunderstruck at her munificence, but before he could find words in which to utter his gratitude, Anne had again removed far from him. He waited not for further permission, but at once started off in his celebrated song, although he was no longer the Diddle'em that he had once been; yet, when he came to the words,

For be they black, white, fair, or brown,
And though they got up with the lark in the morn,
Yet none could be up to Diddle'em-Downy,

there was an immense roar of laughter; but almost anything would, upon that Christmas-eve, have caused a laugh, for everybody had come prepared to be happy, and happy indeed they all appeared to be. It was now proposed that every one should kiss the bride, but to this William decidedly objected; and as he was the King of the Bean, why, his word became law, and thus Flora escaped the dreadful infliction.

Now the delicious "lamb's wool" was handed round. As many of our readers, particularly the gentler kind, may not be aware of the mysteries of lamb's wool, we will explain how this exquisite beverage is concocted; a number of apples are tied to the end of a number of strings, and are then hung up to roast before a blazing fire; under each apple stands a tankard of ripe delicious ale, well seasoned with sugar, spice, and nutmeg; when the apples are done thoroughly, they drop from the strings, and having fallen into the ale, it is then ready for drinking. The real name is supposed to have been *la mas u'hal*, that is, the day of the apple fruit, but being pronounced *lamasool*, our English tongues soon corrupted it to *lamb's wool*.

After some few dozens of the tankards of lamb's wool had passed from lip to lip, the merriment increased prodigiously, and a general dance took place. Even the merchant and his Alyce were not permitted to decline joining in this part of the delights of a Christmas-eve. Nor did Edward and Anne refuse; but the happiest and merriest couple there, was Flora and her newly-made husband.

All seemed joy around, so while they are thus happily engaged we will let fall the curtain upon OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

"And is that the end?" we think we hear more than one fair reader say; "it is really quite abominable of these authors—they never will tell all one would wish to know. I, for one, should have liked to have known whether the old man did get his brother's property—and what became of the property that Horton stole from Sir Filbut Fussy—and what became also of Lord Talbot—but most of all, I should like to have known a little of the after-lives of Edward and Anne, for if it be really true, that the autograph of Edward Osborne is still to be seen at the British Museum, it would appear he must have become some one of consequence, or that some one of consequence became so through him."

These few queries, gentle reader, shall be answered. First, the old man did get his brother's property, and lived many years to enjoy it, in the Cottage on the Heath, and many a visit did the lovely Anne pay him there; the stolen property of Sir Filbut was never discovered; Lord Talbot, in due course, became the Earl of Shrewsbury, and continued an intimate friend of Sir William Hewet, (for he was knighted after being Lord Mayor,) and when Sir William died, so says his will, he left the earl a ring with his initials engraved thereon, W.H. That the earl proposed for the hand of Hewet's daughter, may be found recorded in Pennant's London, where after describing the heroic conduct of Hewet's apprentice, Edward Osborne, he has words to this effect—"That the hand of Hewet's daughter was greatly sought after when she became marriageable; amongst others who offered, was the Earl of Shrewsbury; but the merchant replied to all, that 'Osborne had saved her, and that Osborne should enjoy her.'"

Sir William Hewet, at his death, besides the ring to the earl, left a fortune of £6000 a year, the greater portion of which came to Edward Osborne; he also left the Clothworkers' Company £15 to provide a dinner for the Livery attending his funeral; and 6s. 8d. for every maiden of his native place who should be married during the first year after his decease.

Edward's after-life was one of unvarying happiness and success; he became Lord Mayor of London, in 1583, when he received knighthood. After the death of Sir William Hewet, Osborne and his sweet Anne resided in the merchant's mansion in Philpot Lane.

Now we feel quite convinced, although our gentle readers do not like to ask the question, that the setting down the number of children they had, will be a piece of information not at all unacceptable; well then, they had five, two sons and three daughters. Hewet Osborne, one of the sons, was knighted by the Earl of Essex during the war in Ireland; the other son's name was Edward, who never married. Two of the daughters' names were Anne and Alyce; the name of the third we have not been able to discover. The great-grandson of our hero, was Sir Thomas Osborne, who was raised to the peerage by King Charles the Second, as Viscount Latimer, and Baron Kiveton; he next was created Earl of Danby, then Marquis of Carmarthen, and on May 4, 1694, became the first Duke of Leeds. The present Duke of Leeds is a lineal descendant of our Edward of Old London Bridge.

PETER OF COLECHURCH.

OF this priest architect whose name must still be revered as the builder of the first stone bridge that ever crossed the river Thames, but little is known. It appears according to the account given by that learned antiquary, Thompson, in his *Chronicles of London Bridge*, page 45, that Peter was "a priest and chaplain of St. Mary Colechurch, an edifice, which, until the great fire of London, stood on the north side of the Poultry, at the south end of a turning denominated Conyhoop Lane, from a poulterer's shop having the sign of three conies hanging over it. This chapel, of which the skilful Peter was curate, was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and famous as the place where St. Edmund and St. Thomas à Beckett were presented at the baptismal font."

His great work, which has brought his name so honourably down to our own times, was began in 1176. It took thirty-three years to complete; but the architect had died in the year 1205, so that he never had the satisfaction of viewing his finished work. His body was buried in the chapel on the Bridge, which chapel was dedicated to St. Thomas à Beckett, and was familiarly called St. Thomas of the Bridge.

A more particular account of this famous Bridge will be found in the course of the *Romances*.

In 1737, the chapel on the Bridge was occupied by a Mr. Yaldwin, as a dwelling and warehouse; and in this year, while repairing the staircase leading to the lower chapel, he discovered the remains of a body, supposed to be those of Peter of Colechurch.

The last arch of Peter's Bridge was not destroyed until the latter end of the year 1832. The present London Bridge was opened to the public, August 1st, 1831.

When we regard the miserable state of Westminster Bridge, dying, as we may say, of premature old age, for it has stood only about a hundred years, our admiration of Peter's gigantic effort, is surprisingly increased; for, notwithstanding the imperfect knowledge of civil engineering in his day, he yet constructed an edifice, which was not only regarded as one of the wonders of the world, but which stood the unceasing attacks of nearly a million of raging floods, during six entire centuries. The powerfully-destructive rush of waters may be easily conceived, when it is remembered that the river itself was no less than *nine hundred feet wide*, yet, at every rising and falling of the tide, it had to find its course through a water-way of only *one hundred and ninety-four feet*, caused by the thickness of the stone piers, and the piles, or *sterlings*, driven round them to prevent their foundations from being washed away.

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